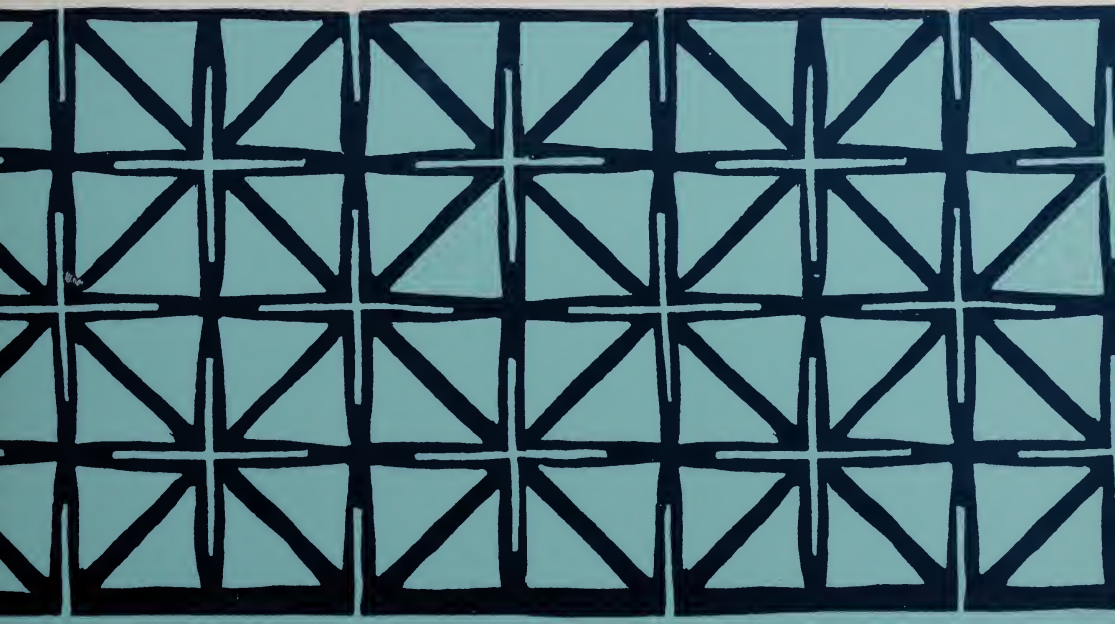
FAMILY AND FARM

IN SOUTHERN CAMEROON

Jane I. Guyer



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GLOSSARY OF BETI TERMS USED IN THE TEXT

Field Types, Land

afan	forest, bush
afub	field, plot
afub owondo	groundnut field
asan	dry season, monocropped field; also used for colonial rice plots
bindi	harvested groundnut plot
elobi	plot on river bank or other wetland
esep	large plot for melon-seed
ekodog	groundnut fallow
falag	plot behind the house
kundu	esep-fallow
nlon	savanna

Tools

akon	spear
ekop	short-handled hoe
ebak	short-handled hoe
fa	machete
nton	long-handled digging stick
ovon	axe

Seasons

asil	March-June; first rainy season
oyon	July-August; short dry season
akap	September-November; heavy rains
esep	December-February; long dry season

Society

aba'a	men's house
akuma	wealth
aluk	marriage
ati	quality of nobility, independence
bikie	iron-rod currency
bilaba	competitive exchange
dzal	hamlet, village
ebon	lover
kasin	women's kitchen (pidgin origin)
mbama	village of polygynous headman
mevungu	women's ritual society
mininga	wife, married woman
mkpɔg	favorite wife

mo̲ngo̲	child
mot dzal	head of a hamlet
mvia	institution of co-resident lovers of a polygynous headman's wives
mvog	large descent group; maximal lineage or clan
nda	house
ndabot	family, minimal lineage
nkukuma	headman, village chief (see akuma)
nkus	widow
nnən	stranger
nnyamoro	mature man
nsən	courtyard of hamlet
nti	independent man (pl. beti; see ati)
olo̲	slave
sso	men's initiation

Acknowledgements

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In Cameroon I was fortunate to be affiliated, on both occasions, with the National Advanced School of Agriculture in Yaoundé, in the Division of Rural Sociology. I am grateful to the director of the school, M. Bol Alima, and to sociologist Hans van de Belt, for the various kinds of support which they offered, and which made that affiliation so productive.

Archival work was carried out in the Cameroon National Archives in Yaoundé, the Archives Nationales, Section Outre-Mer in Paris, and in the United Nations Library in New York.

In Yaoundé, I benefitted from language work with Florent Lebongo. Marie-Madeleine Edoa interpreted for me until interviews about farming could be carried out in the Beti language. During the process of writing the field report (1977) and in carrying out the comparative work (1979), conversations with other scholars helped to focus the issues; in particular, I learned a great deal from Hans van de Belt, Lambert van Gils, François Tchala, Jacques Weber, Rigobert Mbala Owono, N'Sangou Arouna, and from many discussions, over a long period, with Jeanne Henn. Gisèle Tchoungui was enormously helpful with suggestions and contacts during my return visit in 1979. Beti notables in Yaoundé and in the countryside instructed me in local history; amongst them I should mention individually Simon Noah, Jean-Jacques Aba Ebanga, Moise Bengono, and Abbé Theodore Tsala, who was both notable and scholar.

Because so many scholars have worked with data on Beti society and history, one has the inspiration of an accumulated enterprise to draw on. I have had the opportunity of conversations with some of these scholars, and also feel indebted to others I have never met. But the sense of a broader collaborative endeavor is particularly represented in two people: Abbé Tsala, whose help is acknowledged in almost all recent works by others, and Philippe Laburthe-Tolra, who has given encouragement and practical help to a piece of work whose emphasis on material life differs from his own concern with the spiritual.

For the fieldwork, my list of debts is the longest. The local officials in the chef-lieus of the arrondissements in which I worked at length, or simply visited for a series of interviews, were unfailingly helpful. In Okola, the clerk of the court interpreted cases and court records for me with patience and skill. In all the villages in which I worked, those who introduced me, and the chiefs who accepted my presence, extended their hospitality. In Nkolfeb and Nkometou, the village chiefs, Pius Lengono and Rene Nteme, and the presidents of the local chapter of the party, Antoine Ewodo and Fridolin Etoga, helped to set up the work, gave advice, and general-

ly fostered the research as well as being solicitous for my own well-being.

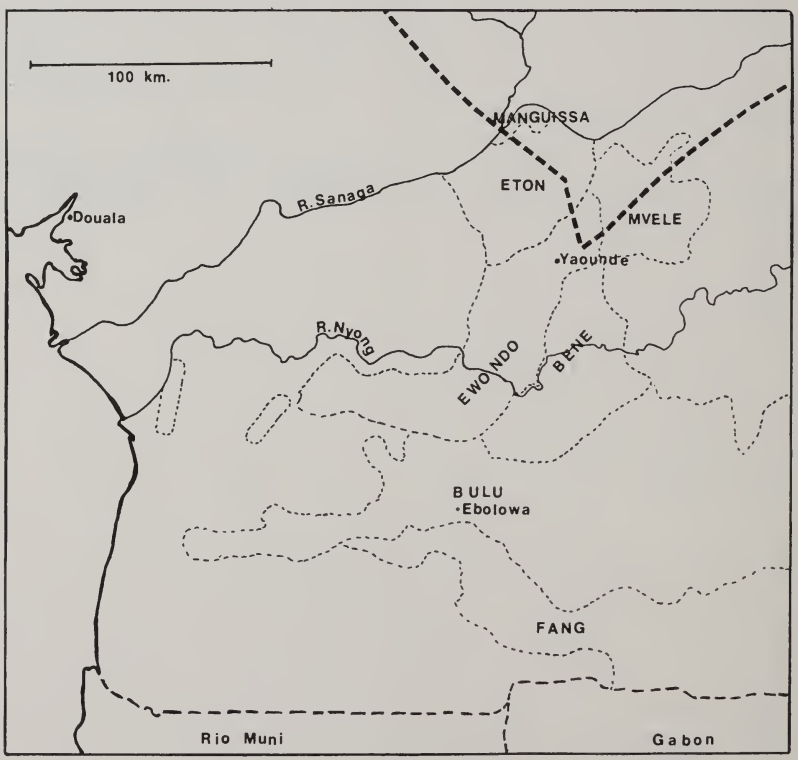
Above all, the Beti women engaged in the whole effort with enormous generosity, offered to me personally, and also devoted to the content of the research. Their patient explanations of what, to them, were obvious facts of ordinary life, their careful record-keeping, and challenging questions provided not only the basis for an analytical reconstruction of family and farm, but also a caution against over-simplistic interpretation. In part, it is this which accounts for the long detour between 1977 and now, during which I explored the macro-sociology of Southern Cameroon and comparative cases of other African systems to allow the contours of Beti history to come into sharper focus.

Sara Berry gave helpful comments on the original field report. Marta Wenger helped analyze cocoa incomes. In the final stages of writing, I was fortunate to have the advice of Margaret Jean Hay and Bill Freund, whose comments helped to focus the interpretation. The latter is my responsibility alone.

Throughout the research and writing, my husband, children, and larger family have given generous support and shown great tolerance for the demands which understanding material life in another family system placed on our own.

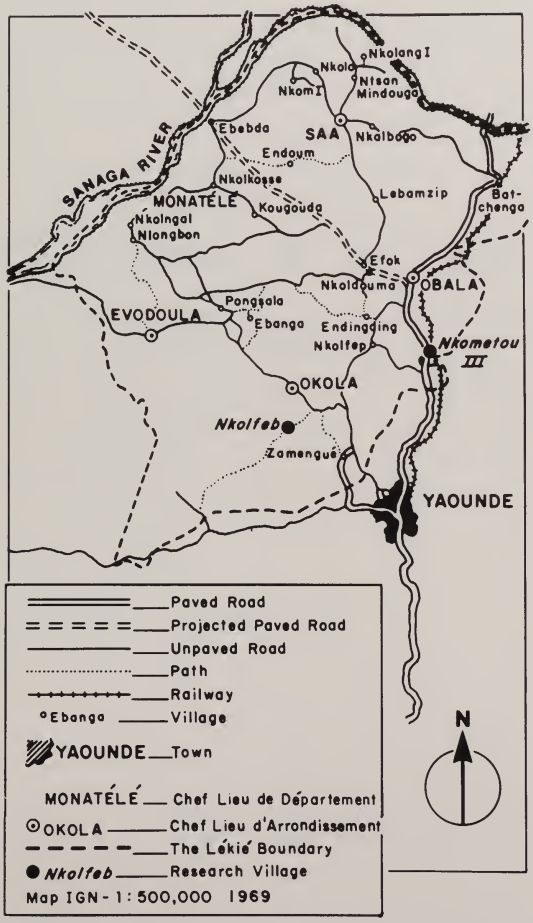
SOUTHERN CAMEROON:

SUBGROUPS OF THE BETI-BULU-FANG POPULATIONS



DEPARTEMENT DE LA LEKIE:

PRIMARY RESEARCH VILLAGES, 1976



PART I:

FAMILY, FARM, AND ECONOMIC STRUCTURES,

1890 - 1970

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

This study is an attempt to address African family history and agricultural history as interactive processes. In no facet of this enterprise am I lacking colleagues. In social theory, the relationship between forms of social organization, productive patterns, and accumulative dynamics is a fundamental and classic one, and in ethnography, the Beti of Southern Cameroon are the subject of a fine literature compiled and interpreted by German, French, American and Beti scholars.[1] Its contribution therefore lies less in originality of content than in the attempt to use a rich resource base to address in some emprical detail the old, but still crucial, question of "continuity and change."[2]

The central topic is women's farming. In the scholarly literature on Africa, "female farming" has represented one striking example of "continuity" in the midst of rapid "change." Its survival under twentieth-century conditions fell awkwardly at a tangent to evolutionary models positing necessary and concomitant shifts in production patterns, family organization, and political structure, from extensive to intensive, from simple to diversified, from descent-based to conjugal-based, and from egalitarian to stratified. These models had their origin in the seminal work of Lewis Henry Morgan in the nineteenth century (1877), and received powerful elaboration by Jack Goody's comparative study almost a hundred years later (1976). The universally noted "breakdown" in African kin-based production units during the twentieth century seemed consonant with these interpretations. On the other hand, the breakdown of units was accompanied by a marked resilience in the sexual division of labor. Ester Boserup (1970) was the first to attempt a broad explanation, seeing it, as Meillassoux did later (1981), as a feature fixed in place by the demands of the colonial capitalist system for cheap male labor and cheap male-produced agricultural commodities. The persistence of women's farming was seen as functional within the twentieth-century political economy. Put in over-simplified terms, it replaced a "new form/new function" vision of African family relations, with an "old form/new function" vision.

[1]The German ethnographer Tessmann wrote the first major work on the Fang-Boulou-Beti peoples (1913). French ethnographers include Alexandre and Binet (1958), and Laburthe-Tolra, whose thesis (1977) and book (1981) comprise the most exhaustive reconstruction of Beti culture and society in the late nineteenth century. De Thé (1968, 1970) and Vincent (1976) have worked on women's position, Balandier (1955) on modern change among the Fang of Gabon. American historian Quinn has traced Beti political change (1970), and Fernandez's work on religious innovation among the Fang is a major ethnographic source. Classic work by Beti scholars includes Tsala (1956, 1958, 1973) and Ngoa (1968).

[2]These terms are the title of an influential volume edited by Bascom and Herskovits (1959).

One is less skeptical of the ultimate conclusion than made aware of a gap in the understanding of the social and cultural processes involved, of the way in which "breakdown" in organizational form and persistence in the division of labor interact, of the struggles and adjustments of different categories of local populations, and of the longer-term implications of these for both productive practice and local social structures. The simplicity of the question one wants to pose - How has female farming worked under the shifting conditions of the twentieth century? - is in contrast to the difficulty of the theoretical questions it immediately provokes.

For at least two decades the description and interpretation of social change has been the single most dominant problem in African studies, one for which several different theoretical approaches have been proposed as the key. In the process the issue of "continuity," or in other theoretical modes "reproduction" (Edholm et al 1977), "habitus" (Bourdieu 1977) or "the work of custom" (Murray 1981), has tended to take a theoretical second place from which it is currently emerging. The necessarily aggressive attempts to explain the current institutions in African rural economies in terms of current political and economic structures made starkly clear (and therefore forced one to deal with) institutions, relationships and practices, such as the division of labor by sex, which apparently cross structural watersheds. My own field research was done among a population with close cultural and linguistic affinities with the Fang of Gabon, the subject of one of the seminal works advocating a focus on change, the determining power of "the colonial situation" and the importance of a "diachronic and relational study of the societies once termed 'primitive'" (Balandier 1963:38). However, in the attempt to pursue this endeavor with respect to family and farm, the fact of persistence has forced itself to the forefront. In fact, it is partly because change has been so fundamental and so well documented that persistence can emerge out of the shadows of cultural lag theory, and beyond the functionalism of "the system," to be explored as a social process with contours and limits, that is, a process subject to some precision of description.

In brief, it is certain aspects of women's activities, the cultivation pattern of one critical type of field and the cultural definition of the diet which have been brought forward with so little modification. These inter-connected attributes are powerfully persistent from the nineteenth century when a segmentary population, organized into small villages led by arrogantly independent hunter/warriors, inhabited a forest and savanna-border environment of seemingly inexhaustible riches. Since then the economic and political structure has been revolutionized; not only has an administrative structure been superimposed and marketable commodities produced, but objects of wealth and power have been confiscated, fundamental relationships overruled by law, indigenous ritual outlawed and religion superceded by Catholicism, house styles have been changed, settlement patterns administratively fixed, the game more or less hunted out, and the forest turned into a patchwork of cocoa farms. The population saw repressive military action during pacification, local battles of World War I, the imposition of a chieftaincy system to implement a battery of forced development activities from railway building to the cultivation of new crops, the post-World War II cocoa boom, a succession of state cooperative schemes and rapid urban development after independence. This is by

no means a peripheral population, left to its own devices in a remote region or emiserated labor reserve, but the population of the hinterland of the capital city.

The hundred-year history encapsulated above can be divided into three phases having different structural characteristics. The late pre-colonial Beti system was segmentary and competitive. Until 1945, colonial relations established first by the Germans (1889 to World War I), and then consolidated and intensified by the French under a Mandate of the League of Nations, involved heavy direct taxation in cash and labor. In the post-World War II period, French rule under the United Nations and independent government after 1961 were based on indirect taxation through marketing institutions and price manipulation. There were concomitant changes in Beti social and political organization which will be described in later chapters. But reading across the sequence, as opposed to up and down the levels of any particular structure, run those elements of the division of labor which have persisted over time.[3]

The topic of family and farm in Beti society and history brings together the two subjects which, throughout more general debates about structure and change, have constituted the greatest challenge to any straightforward structural determinism, namely productive techniques and gender relations. Agricultural practice involves both ecological adaptation and socio-political construction, with their different time-frames for cyclical and progressive change, but it is not reducible in any simple way to either one. The agricultural calendar is the subject Bourdieu uses to elaborate his concept of "habitus," that is structured improvisations, as a determinant of practice which is analytically distinguishable from determination by the dominant political and economic structure (1977). In a different ethnographic context, Hunt again found, after detailed social and cultural analysis, that "the space-time continuum of their (Zinacantan) cultural and social life is the face of an old agrarian clock" (1976:250). This image is consonant with Ladurie's summary of decades of work on European productive history, that there are "underlying geological formations" which remain in place from the first agricultural revolution in the eleventh to thirteenth centuries until the second in the nineteenth century (1977:117).

Likewise, it has been one of the contributions of the feminist theory of gender relations to explore continuities across structural

[3]In empirical work, the whole problem of the relation between "structure" and "practice," or "continuity" and "change," is implicitly or explicitly framed by assumptions about what constitutes "structural change." In my own case, I have used changes in the mode of surplus appropriation as indicative of structural change: segmentary forms of accumulation in the nineteenth century, direct appropriation in labor and kind by a ruling class in the early colonial period, indirect taxation through market relations after 1945. This kind of position has been criticized by Rey (1979) because the defining characteristics of a structure should be in the relations of production (1979); in his study of feudalism, Kula would also see the mode of appropriation as variable within the frame of a single structure (1976). The issue is very problematic, but if the bounds of structure are set so wide that a great variety of practices are consonant with it, then a middle level of analysis, of the kind developed by Kula, is needed if the topic of people's actual productive organization is not to be relegated to a theoretically uninteresting issue. For the study of modern Africa, one has also to be aware of the converse problem, of over-particularism, where the "transition" is "blown up and treated as significant, even periodized" (Hart 1982:5).

divides. Structural determinism has often left the dynamics of gender relations in obscurity, and consequently feminist theory has tended to insist on a complex conception of structural relations (see Edholm et al. 1977). Problematic as the concept of patriarchy is when used comparatively and analytically (see Peters 1983), a concept of that kind does endow the continued subordination of women with structural characteristics without reducing male-female relations to a simple function of any particular socio-economic structure. Although she avoids using this terminology and this framework, Ortner is indicating a structural and persistent quality to family relations when she observes that "It is precisely in those areas of life - especially in the so-called domestic domain - where action proceeds with little reflection, that much of the conservatism of systems tends to be located" (1984:150). Without the feminist insistence on the cultural and social construction of gender, this kind of observation can be consigned to a pragmatic explanation or simply taken for granted. For example, Thompson makes an exception for motherhood in his exploration of the routinization of work in the industrial revolution: "The mother of young children ... has not altogether moved out of the conventions of pre-industrial society" (1967:79). Applied to the universal tasks of child-bearing and infant care, the nature/nurture debate which lies behind the distinction between culture and pragmatism in "domestic conservatism" may be difficult to reduce to an empirical "test." But the tendency to resort to universal naturalist explanations of the particular case of women's work in African farming has, in my own view, proven unambiguously to be an obstacle to a comparative and historical understanding (Guyer 1984). Ortner's observation of "conservatism" has to be complemented by her position that gender relations "are largely products of social and cultural processes" (Ortner and Whitehead 1981:1). One is then forced to document and interpret them, rather than allowing them to remain a kind of inevitable backdrop for other processes considered more truly social.

Reconstruction of family relations over time in Africa poses difficult problems of documentation and therefore demands particularly self-critical interpretation. Recent work on the family by historians has been important, especially in documenting "the invention of tradition," where certain "segments of society are trying to push segments of kinship ideology and practice" (Last 1983:147; also Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Chanock 1982; Wilson 1982). Intentional pursuit of sectional interest certainly offers the most tangible subject matter for study. In the long run, however, it needs to be combined, as Ortner suggests, with a theory of motivation which includes the power of cultural definitions and ideological goals. With respect to farming, Beti women are certainly pursuing a livelihood, creating a niche for control of their own immediate welfare under shifting structural conditions, but the form of that pursuit also has a cultural and expressive dimension which legitimates it to others and gives it meaning and predictability to themselves.

Both agriculture and gender studies are therefore moving in a challenging direction, towards an attempt to describe and specify the mutual implications of dominant structure and partially independent structured practice for one another. The present case study

is devoted to a local analysis of this broad issue, to the ways in which "continuity and change" have been constructed, to the interaction of family form, family relations, and agricultural practice over a long period of time and in changing structural contexts. The models of kinship and production developed in the 1960s and 1970s have provided most of the more specific issues to explore even though, as I discuss below, they turn out themselves to be too restrictive. Of particular importance are: the application of peasant theory to Africa, with its emphasis on the formation of a relationship between peasant and state and on the emergence of rural differentiation; articulation theory, with its efforts to come to terms with the particularity of African kinship structures; and the important cross-cutting concern with the "decline" in women's status, "from cultivar to family aid" (Boserup 1970:57). Since I have found these ideas stimulating but the constructs unconvincing, let me outline briefly why this is true, and therefore why the text is less the application of a theory than the attempt to pose a series of questions to a particular case.

The research began as a study of a classic "female farming system," one to which many of Boserup's observations (1970) about subsistence maintenance at the bottom of a colonial and cash crop economy certainly applied during the first half of the century. Men became cocoa farmers and women grew food crops, primarily for the family diet. By the 1970s, however, women farmers had developed a market orientation to meet the rapidly expanding urban demand for food in Yaoundé, the national capital. Clearly their limitation to "subsistence production," and perhaps even to low value crops, was a relative and shifting condition. While there was no doubt about these women's heavy work load, low level of living, and limited occupational choices, they clearly thought that their present situation represented progress (see Vincent 1977). They had demands for improvement in everything from the marketing infrastructure to education and access to other jobs, but there was little resort to "tradition" to lend these demands legitimacy. Unless one has great confidence in a particular interpretation, and a willingness to resort to "false consciousness" as an explanation for people's representations of their own lives, it is difficult to sustain an unmitigated "decline" theory in the face of disagreement from the very people it concerns. Indeed, any analysis of "the position of women" over the last hundred years would result in similar reservations about the posited higher status of women in the pre-colonial period and about any necessarily anti-women implications of new family law in the post-colonial period, as well as a conviction that colonialism cannot be treated as a single stage or a unitary structure.

People see the long term effect of political, economic and religious change as having narrowed the status gap between man and wife. Part of this is due, of course, to a decline in men's status, rather than a rise in women's. One man expressed this in literal stature terms: men were no longer as tall and as robust as in the past. Another went so far as to say that there were no longer Beti in the original sense of the word, "nobles," but rather "main-d'oeuvre," laborers. I was often reminded that this or that practice was not "the same" as in the past, that now things were "spoiled" (*ndaman*), from the fertility of the soil, to the relative

social peace within communities which was ensured by the unquestioned autocratic authority of the senior men. Cloth was sometimes used as the symbol of change. One of Laburthe-Tolra's informants describes the loss of male authority thus:

> Why did the Whites make us clothe our wives? I used to have twenty wives. When they went naked, it was enough that I growl here in my *aba'a* [men's house] for them to stop talking in their twenty kitchens. When they had dresses and wrappers, I grumbled here in vain, and they continued to chat as if nothing was going on! (1977:893).

Women, on the other hand, have tended to see change in positive terms. For one elderly woman, cloth was again the first image which came to mind in the context of a discussion of change; then, women carried their babies in animal skins, and now they carry them in cloth. Similar images are used in Vincent's interviews with elderly Beti women; the wearing of cloth and the ability to speak in public are cited as major changes (Vincent 1976:74, 132). In the past "There was no avenue between husband and wife, no way to express oneself. Women had no voice" (Vincent 1976:69). Now, as another woman told me, a wife with critical words to say to her husband no longer has to provide a potential "escape clause" by vigorously and noisily stirring her cooking pot at the same time. Above all, the large scale polygyny, child betrothal, the gambling of rights in women, and the severe treatment of widows which were present in late nineteenth century society have all disappeared. Women do regret some aspects of the life of the past: the loss of respect between generations, the lack of time and resources for frequent celebrations, and the present individualistic attitude of "*chacun pour soi*" (everyone for him/herself). But they tend not to regret the passing of the pre-colonial marriage system. None of this is to say that men and women have equal rights, equal say, or equal access to resources, but women are neither unambiguously worse off than before, nor bound into a new, impervious, male-dominated nuclear household structure.

What is therefore crucial in the work of Boserup and others concerned with the status of women is not the generalizations about decline in status, but the focus on gender relations in addition to the more traditional concern with changing family form, the breakdown of kin groups and so on (see also Oppong 1983). Besides the questionable directionality of change implied in theories of decline[4] is a further problem with analyzing the changes in women's position in terms of status; it is simply very difficult to arrive at any satisfactory means of making accurate descriptions and measurements, or of interpreting the data one can amass (Sanday 1973).

[4]The idea that colonial rule resulted in a decline in women's status is also argued by Leacock and Etienne (1980). The target for their argument is the old anthropological assumption that the ethnographic present could represent the whole range of possible social and cultural forms. Their argument against this position is well taken, and the evidence of social orders in which gender relations were more egalitarian is important. However, as a generalization about all colonial experience it cannot be sustained.

The question of relative power is more accessible within a structural analysis of the overall configuration of a particular system, and for this purpose the models of African economic structures in the twentieth century are most relevant. Here the "story-line" is one of successive structures and their implications, rather than a directional progression. But again there are problems. It is not that those models do not apply at all to Beti history, so much as that they all apply in part or for particular historical periods. The vent-for-surplus theory of agricultural growth (see Hopkins 1973), where resources are reallocated to achieve expansion in production without forcing welfare levels down below adequacy, and the colonial mode of production theory, where violence is used to force reallocation (Dupré and Rey 1980) seem to indicate processes which were going on simultaneously in the Beti area during the inter-war years (Guyer 1980a). Force was a major factor in generating certain export crops, but people's efforts to escape from repression and reallocate resources to market production was a factor in generating others. Patterns of export crop production in the inter-war years are not reducible to one of these processes alone.

Similarly, peasant models for the post-war period are too narrow in conception. Individuals are now directly incorporated into state structures such as cooperatives, but the macro and micro dynamics of the situation do not follow directly from this. As Bernstein defines peasant production, one of its characteristics is household organization and a subsistence teleology (1978:62). This, he claims, makes the units of production susceptible to the "simple reproduction squeeze" under the pressures of incorporation into a capitalist price system. It is certainly true that agricultural surplus is squeezed out of the peasantry, but whether or not this leads to subsistence deficits depends on the structure of consumption, which in turn depends on who is producing what within the family, and which activities are therefore squeezed. The evidence for responsiveness of this sort has to be worked through empirically. Neither hunger nor debt nor increasing differentiation are the inevitable outcome of price fluctuations. Which elements are adjusted when people pursue coping strategies, or, in neo-classical terms, the income elasticities of demand for different goods, depends on family structure and may have important implications for longer-term change, as I will explore in later chapters.

On the macro-politics of peasant relations, the postindependence period has seen the state and the peasantry express the mutual distrust which Hyden sees as characteristic of an "uncaptured peasantry" (1980), the first suspecting the second of unpredictable productive behavior, and the second saying cynically, as one cocoa farmer did, that "when they see we've suffered enough they change the name (of the intervention)." On the other hand, this population has never been openly militant about the cocoa price, has been politically collaborative and highly productive since the early days of colonial rule (Joseph 1977).

Finally, and very importantly because it incorporates gender in ways which a peasant theory tends not to, there is Rey's concept of the lineage mode of production and its articulation with capitalism (1975). In skeletal form, this model and its precursor (Meillassoux 1960) indicate important dynamics in pre-colonial Beti society, even

though corporate lineages had limited and situational functions. It is much less clear, however, how present domestic relations can be depicted as enough of a continuation of those relations to warrant the development of an entire theory of articulation. Rey's position tends to be polemic rather than analytical when it comes to positing the necessary continuities; following the decline of colonial chieftaincy, he claims, "one rediscovers the true fundamental unit: the family, that is to say the lineage" (1971:454). Confounding the two terms makes it quite difficult to see why the concept of lineage mode is needed at all for the later period, since all societies have families of one sort or another. Empirically it raises the spectre of Foster-Carter's important question "how do we know when the second and crucial stage of articulation has been reached?", that is, when capitalism is dominant, has 'taken root'" (1978:226).

The fact that for various periods one can recognize elements of an articulated lineage mode of production as well as an enterprising and collaborative peasantry and an uncaptured peasantry is disconcerting. It suggests that some of the contradictions we see in African societies are a function of our own conceptual frameworks, that the perception of persistence and change is to some degree a function of theoretical conviction alone. The claims are either too global or are expressed in terms which are too imprecise to bring up against the test of the data.

Through the examination in some detail of various separate threads in the complex braid of Beti domestic and productive history, it seemed to me that one basic problem stemmed from the way in which the necessary theoretical primacy assigned to particular elements tended to consign other dimensions of social and productive life to a derivative status. It is not necessarily the elements of the models which are misguided, but the entailments of the elements with one another. The neo-classical tradition has tended to equate the small size of production units with increased efficiency and larger total production; as Cleave puts it, "Traditional division of labor by function or crop ... (is) a form of disguised unemployment.... Communal labor systems (which have a reputation of being inefficient) ... tend to break down with the opportunity for new employment" (1977:165). But is this always the case? Is the association between size, efficiency and growth in output a necessary one which occurs in all cases, regardless of the internal structure of the economy, or is it contingent? Richards, for example, has suggested the opposite, that "Perhaps the main significance of household size as a factor in West African agricultural production is that larger 'domestic' groups offer more scope for specialization and economies of scale in post-harvest crop processing" (1983: 21).

Writing from a different academic tradition, Clarke has questioned the primacy attributed to market forces or technical possibilities in the breakup of large compounds. He suggests instead that political changes were crucial. However, he simply states the conclusion that "the change in household size and structure has a critical effect on the way in which cash crop production developed" (1981:818). The question is: how, by what mechanisms and with what implications for such important processes as production patterns, rural differentiation, and the development of occupational specialization? If, as is implied in Rey's lineage mode, the survival of bridewealth payment is one index that "lineage" relations of produc-

tion have been preserved, how does this payment now relate to a different productive endeavor and a different structure of accumulation? None of these implications follows directly from the primary proposition.

A related problem is the one of precision in the difficult and murky waters of interpretation. Cooper's suggestion that the most basic questions are "what makes some agricultural systems stagnate and some evolve, while others are destroyed and replaced?" (1981: 302) demands the development of means of describing and distinguishing the processes of stagnation, evolution, destruction and replacement while they are in progress. If, as Richards suggests (1983b), general models of agricultural intensification apply poorly to the African ecology, then it becomes difficult to distinguish between, for example, stagnation and slow, ecologically sound change. Indicators of progress derived from old evolutionary models have inevitably colored interpretations of agricultural change in Africa, perhaps inappropriately.

Writing about persistence presents its own problems of analysis and exposition. The drama of before-and-after change can be found at the points of structural change; the shifting micro-politics of resource and income control are related to these changes but not entirely derivative of them; the field system, which is the material base, has yet greater qualities of constancy. Their interaction cannot be presented as a straightforward sequence. In a philosophical critique of historical method, Munz puts it very simply: "It is difficult to write any story if one does not know what the end is" (1977:244). In my own view, the understanding of gender in relation to production in African history is still too limited to project the kinds of "ends" which the works already discussed have tended towards. Goody's bold mapping of two types of domestic structure and production, one characteristic of Africa and the other of Asia (1976), implies that African society should be making the transistion. However, neither unambiguous decline nor a tendency to structural consistency is very plausible, as Ranger has pointed out in his critique of studies of the Southern and Central African peasantries: "The Rake's Progress is not necessarily downhill all the way," and "the developing internal dynamics had *something* to do with the outcome" (1978:132, 115; emphasis in the original).

The solution I have chosen to the problem of exposition is to emphasize the careers of two main protagonists: the Beti wife, a category which comprised the quasi totality of adult women a hundred years ago, grouped into quite large polygynous units, but which now comprises only about 60 percent of the adult female population, the vast majority in monogamous marriage; and the second is a particular field-type, the *afub owondo*, the groundnut field, which has been an integral component of the Beti productive system throughout the nineteenth-century period of migration, twentieth-century forced cultivation and agricultural innovation, and the present expansion of food cultivation for the urban market.

In examining their social history, it is not the models of family and production discussed above which are taken up, but their insights, namely (a) the centrality of gender in historical understanding of African production, (b) the importance of the dynamics of power, from the domestic to the state level and beyond, and (c) the necessity of exploring the different directions which people's

actions could have taken, as Mark Harrison has put it, "to present the options which were discarded - in all their incompleteness and lack of finish - as well as the one actually taken" (1979:98), that is, to pay particular attention to the changing structure of options and the social processes of adjustment, negotiation and outright struggle which account for the patterns of activity which emerge from them.

The terms of description and analysis are perhaps eclectic, but they reflect an attempt to address an issue which Richards has indicated in the following way: "Satisfactory analysis of agrarian change in West Africa requires careful attention, therefore, to the analytical integration of material relating both to agricultural ecology and social relations of agricultural production in historically and geographically specific instances" (1983:27). The important term is "analytical integration," namely the development of terms of description which demand documentation of both the material and socio-political dimensions of production, rather than automatically directing all analysis to one or the other. The present work is an exploration in these directions, rather than a formal exposition of an analytical framework which would meet these criteria.

The attempt to bring the two together, for a long historical period, means drawing on different kinds of source material and carrying out different kinds of analysis. Part I draws on historical ethnography to show the context of family relations and farming patterns in the pre-colonial period, and on historical sources to show the various forces these have been subject to. The actual processes of familial and agricultural chnge are difficult to document or infer from this kind of source, especially if one is questioning the temptation to fill in the gaps with general models imposed on uneven data. One can, however, establish something about the local and national structures, and at least suggest the main outlines of their interaction. Part II is based on field research and therefore can concentrate on the processes whereby new situations are negotiated. The focus therefore shifts mid-course, from structure and history to the current improvisations which shape their interaction at the local level.

It remains here to give a brief background to Beti society and history, and to outline the methods of study.

The Beti

The Beti constitute one of the larger ethnic groups of Southern Cameroon, about half a million people. The term Beti is one of many terms used to designate the same population, and the profusion of terminology reflects the radically segmentary nature of the indigenous social system. The language is spoken over a vast area of Southern Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon, and was designated as Fang, Mpangwe, or Pahouin by early ethnographers and linguists. In spite of quite different dialects, the basic language and aspects of culture are comprehensible throughout this area. Early in the colonial period, different large sub-groups were recognized, mainly for administrative purposes, and as the chefferies and arrondissements proliferated, so did the use of terms, usually translated into French as *tribus*, to denote the populations of different areas. The

divisions approximated quite inexactly to indigenous notions of clanship, although the inhabitants of a region can often trace common patrilineal descent. The larger sub-groups, Bulu, Beti, and Fang, are again subdivided, with the Beti constituted by the Eton, Ewondo, Bene, Mvele, MbidaMbane, Manguissa and others. Sometimes this population has been referred to as Ewondo collectively, because the dictionaries and biblical translations were done in the Ewondo dialect, and the capital city of Cameroon, Yaoundé, was named after the Ewondo inhabitants by the Germans. But Beti is emerging as the accepted collective term, partly perhaps because its referent is not really an ethnic or descent category but a social status; *nti* referred to a free man, a noble.

On the eve of colonial rule, this population was advancing slowly into the coastal forest from the savanna-border area where they had apparently lived for centuries. Attracted towards the sea by trade in guns, ivory and salt, and repelled from the savanna by Fulani slave raiding, they were moving into the forest as conquerors, armed with a superior metal technology and a highly productive farming system.[5]

Stopped in their tracks by a series of German missions of pacification, and by a sedentization campaign which extended well into the 1920s, the Beti were incorporated into the colonial system as one of its critical elements. A leadership was formed which supported the German colonial endeavor, retreating with the German troops as Cameroon fell in the First World War (Quinn 1973). A delegation spent the next years in Europe, conferring with politicians and heads of state, and returned to Cameroon at the reluctant request of the new French government, determined to bring political and economic development to their people. During the inter-war period the Beti area was one of the most productive in the country, providing taxes, cash crops, corvée labor to build the capital and commercial centers, labor for railway construction, and a small cadre of educated people who began to move into administration.

Starting before the Second World War and picking up momentum after it, the Beti area became one of the centers of cocoa cultivation, then and now one of Cameroon's major exports. In the post-colonial period it remains an agricultural center, adding food crops for the city to the rest of the productive repertoire. Culturally as well as economically and politically, the people of this region have taken new directions. Almost all its children, boys and girls, go to school, many people speak French, and most belong to the Catholic Church.

The ecology is mainly tropical rainforest, with rainfall of about 1,600 mm p.a., falling in two seasons per year, March to June and late August to November (see Appendix A). The population density is varied, averaging about 15 per square kilometer, but going as high as 70 per square kilometer in the northern Eton and Manguissa regions.[6] The high density in this region may be due in part to the relatively fertile alluvial soils near to the Sanaga River, but

[5]For early Beti history, Laburthe-Tolra's work is the most detailed source (1977, 1981).

[6]The data on rainfall and ecology are those used by the National Advanced School of Agriculture in Yaoundé. (See Appendix A.)

it is also the historical accident of where the people were, on the safe side of the river from the advancing Fulani, and moving toward the coastal trade, at the time of colonial conquest.

This environment was remarkably productive of game, wild fruit and vegetables, and provided virgin soils for cultivation. For more than half a century people have expressed concern about declining fertility under more intensive land use, and of course it must have declined from its condition of virgin fertility. How far, and whether there is a downward trend, is still difficult to distinguish from the effects of new parasites, and low rainfall years in the mid-1970s. Since concern was expressed from the 1920s onwards, before the expansion of cocoa, it is at least probable that such changes are developing slower than expected then.

The decline in availability of game is absolutely clear. Hunting was an important occupation for men. It provided a major part of the diet as well as the imagery for male prowess. Beyond this, the productivity of the forest was one pole in the dualistic conception of the qualities of the balanced life (Fernandez 1982).

The present settlement pattern consists of small villages, ranging in population from about 200 to 1,000, situated along roads and tracks. The construction of permanent village sites and permanent housing only resulted from a determined and multi-faceted reconstructive effort by the French colonial government. Military force was used to bring the population out of the forest and onto the tracks, and in the 1920s the medical campaign against a disastrous outbreak of sleeping sickness was used to implement and legitimate this policy. The quasi-impossibility of moving settlements or creating new ones for several decades, has contributed to changing land use patterns, as well as containing the old political cycle whereby new leaders hived off. Houses are now individuated, and one never sees the *abaa* of the past, the men's meeting house with its fire at night for collective gatherings. The present houses, with their tin roofs and no fire except in the women's kitchens are thought of as "cold houses" (Fernandez 1982).

In these ways the present Beti population inhabits a changed environment, not only politically and economically restructured, but ecologically and spiritually transformed. The reshaping of domestic relations and agricultural practice has been one way in which the changes have been mediated.

Methods

The field research on current patterns of family and production was the first stage of the project (1975-1976). Two villages were chosen as the primary research sites, and others were visited for comparative purposes. Nkolfeb and Nkometou are both in the relatively densely populated Eton region, the Département de la Lékié. A high proportion of the "traditional" food consumed in Yaoundé, and coming from the immediate hinterland, is estimated to come from this region (N'sangou 1975); it is sometimes referred to as "la mamelle de la capitale," not only a major source itself but also a conduit for food coming from regions beyond. Cocoa farming is a major occupation for men in both villages, although the men of Nkometou have diversified considerably more than the men of Nkolfeb. The two villages are approximately equidistant from the capital, about 30km

away. The major difference to be explored was their situation on the transport system; Nkometou is on a paved road, a major artery which links Yaoundé to the north and west as well as to its immediate hinterland. Nkolfeb is about 3km down a dirt track, off an unpaved road. It was infrequently served by bush-taxis and could be impassable in the heavy rains. The two villages were therefore in totally different situations of market access, especially for perishable food crops as opposed to the cocoa crop.

Strict controlled comparison is not possible of course; the villages differed in other ways. Ecologically, Nkolfeb is deeper into the forest than Nkometou which is on the northern savanna border. Ecology and history together account for the lower dependence of Nkometou men on cocoa. Long involvement with colonial institutions because of their situation on the main road has meant a longer exposure to education and a broader range of occupations pursued, both within the village and through migration. Wealth differences are quite marked, but are due to new factors such as professional employment and flourishing market-gardening, rather than status in older kinship and political structures. Although the village is quite large, with a total population of 607, all the men except a few recently settled strangers belong to the same descent group and are not strongly differentiated by descent. This is in contrast to Nkolfeb, where, out of a population of 372, 15 of the 71 domestic groups are headed by descendents of former servants or slaves.[7] This is indicated by the name of their descent group. In addition, a group of related villages were administered by a highly polygynous chief during the colonial period, which has left its mark on descent status. On ritual occasions such as funerals, participants are grouped into descent segments, which are placed in such a way as to draw attention to status differences. The association of status difference with wealth difference is very imprecise, however; one of the largest cocoa farms is owned by a man of slave descent.

Data collected included survey information from a sample of 40 women in each village. They were interviewed in their fields, and the plots in that immediate vicinity were measured. From this survey group a smaller sample of women was chosen for more detailed studies of work and budgets. The original small sample for Nkolfeb was 17 and for Nkometou 16. The composition of each sample was chosen to include women in different age brackets and marital statuses. Daily records were kept for two months, July in order to cover a harvest period in the women's food economy, and November to cover the cocoa harvest in the men's economy. The final usable sample consisted of 13 women in each village: 4 single women, 17 married women, 2 separated, and 3 widows.

Further studies included a village census, open-ended discussions with both men and women, a complete review of the court cases for the previous year at the court of Premier Degré in Okola, atten-

[7]These 15 domestic groups consisted of 11 headed by a man, 2 headed by widows of men in this descent group, and 2 headed by daughters of the group, separated and returned home. The group is exogamous; its members intermarry freely with Beti, and with other named groups of the same status. (For village demography, see Appendix B.)

dance at sessions of the court of Première Instance,[8] and analysis of the records of the cocoa cooperative for the Nkolfeb chapter. In the city, interviews were done and reports consulted about the current context of the food market. Most of Part II is based on these sources.

Field research was increasingly complemented by research into agricultural policy and social history in Southern Cameroon through archives, records and oral interviews.[9] A return period of field research in the summer of 1979 was used primarily to document regional variations in precolonial society and production. Six different areas within the Beti hinterland were visited, including villages belonging to different sub-groups and crossing the forest-savanna border. Many old people were interviewed about the precolonial and the colonial periods. Most of Part I is based on this research and on the published sources.

[8]The court of Premier Degré hears only civil cases and regulates such issues as legitimation of children and bridewealth disputes. The court of Première Instance hears cases which involve sentencing.

[9]Papers on this topic include Guyer 1978, 1980a, 1980c, 1983b.

Chapter 2

PRECOLONIAL MARRIAGE AND PRODUCTION

Before the extension of coastal trade in the nineteenth century, long-distance trade and regional specialization were of limited importance in the Beti economy. A rich agriculture, iron production, small-livestock husbandry and some specialist craftsmanship were carried out within regional communities where the division of labor by sex was one of the fundamental principles of organization. It is tempting to build a static model of autarchic communities as a basis for discussion of change, but the Beti economy clearly has a history, even if earlier periods are inaccessible to present study. For example, by the nineteenth century the New World crops were already well integrated into the cropping system. The most detailed sources on pre-colonial society relate not to a "traditional" situation, but to a period when Beti society was in a powerful accumulative mode due to intensified trade in ivory, salt, cloth and arms (Johnson 1978). Regional variation in kin relations and farming patterns at that time provide a sense of flexibilities and constraints as well as a sense of common underlying structure.

The accumulative drive depended on military prowess and the establishment of long distance networks. The military ethic was highly developed, physical stamina trained and admired. Within local communities there were organized competitive activities of several kinds. Young men competed in combat, and women also took part in wrestling contests. There was a passion for gambling among men, in which the stakes could include items of great value.[1] Headmen engaged in competitive exchange of prestige items with one another (*bilaba*), and there was some warfare (*bita*) between local groups, in which people were taken as slaves (*olǫ; belǫ*). All these forms of competition fed into a process whose ultimate aim and expression was accumulative polygynous marriage.

By the mid years of the nineteenth century marriage (*aluk*) had become, as Ngoa expresses it, "a kind of sociological summary where all orders of institution were related to one another" (1968:1). Within the framework of a segmentary patrilineal ideology, local group formation could rest on either of two principles, common descent from a recent ancestor, or polygynous marriage and clientship. The two forms have varied historically and geographically in their importance. Migration seems to have been characterized by the maintenance of descent relations, fairly restricted polygyny, and therefore villages of patrikinsmen and their dependents; this is the pattern reconstructed by Fernandez for the Fang in Gabon, where the village consisted of a number of "village families," "brothers who

[1]The game was known as *abbia*, from the verb *a bi*, to receive or gain. The gambling chips are a well-known form of art from this area. Rights in people could enter into the wager; Vincent's informants included women who were gambled to new husbands (1976).

built opposite each other" across a central court (1982:101-102). With the rapid growth of trade with the coast in the mid- and late nineteenth century, a premium was placed on the development of personally negotiated contractual relations, of which marriage, affinity and clientship were the most available since they already had institutional support. As a result, the scale of polygyny had reached new heights during the nineteenth century, and polygynous villages, known as *mimbama* (sing. *mbama*) apparently proliferated. Here, the houses facing each other across the courtyard were the houses of co-wives. Laburthe-Tolra has argued that the number of wives per headman rose quite sharply, to a peak of well over a hundred in certain cases, and especially in areas on the main trade axes (1981:235). In accordance, the age of marriage fell. Some marriage negotiations were begun before the birth of the child, and girls were being transferred to their husbands' villages at the age of about seven. Only a man who was already a wealthy headman could resist demands of marriage and keep a daughter at home beyond puberty.

Acquisition of trade goods, such as cloth and guns, was therefore part of an accumulative dynamic of polygynous marriage, the two growing together. Local groups were built up around the headman's marriages and the wealth they generated. Wives literally created wealth (*akuma*) for their husband. The women's ritual society was called *mevungu*, from *a vu*, to enrich, and *ngul*, power; it was devoted, not simply to fertility or reproduction in a stable, cyclical mode, but to increase in the Biblical sense of the term. Wives contributed to the increase in their husband's wealth in a variety of ways. They bore children, sons as followers and daughters as the means to bridewealth and affinal ties. They attracted clients to their husband through the institution of *mvia*, whereby he allowed some of them to keep resident lovers (*mintǫbǫ*), who then performed labor services and other support functions.[2] Finally, the women's agricultural work produced much of the routine diet, permitted the necessary entertainment of allies and guests, and provided certain crops which entered into the circuits of exchange.

The fact that marriage was critical to such competitive and accumulative dynamics suggests that men's control over women was all but complete. Laburthe-Tolra has written in terms of the "objectification" of women (1977:890), and has described the harsh sanctions imposed at the least evidence of autonomous action which threatened male supremacy.[3] However, in the context of a focus on change,

[2]This means that, in terms of the dynamics of bridewealth control as outlined by Meillassoux (1960), it was not necessarily the "elder" who witheld, or could not pay, the bridewealth for a young man who actually benefitted from his prolonged juniority. At this period, "elders" were not a simple gerontocratic category within a descent-phrased structure, but wealth accumulators in a marriage-based, competitive political system.

[3]Here Laburthe-Tolra is summarizing in a Western concept the terms in which Beti elders discussed the control and transmission of rights in women; they were a measure of wealth. Whether, and how, this can be expressed in analytical terms such as "subordination," or in politico-ideological terms such as "oppression," has been a source of dispute. Ngoa argues forcefully that "African women were not oppressed," since they were in charge of a defined segment of productive, political, and spiritual life (1974). He uses the same data to argue that there was nothing more valuable than a woman. A further rejoinder has contradicted Ngoa again. (Bilongo 1983)

one needs to search for the variations and the inconsistencies as well as the general rule. I want, not to contradict the overdetermination of women's subordination, but to explore the various points at which power was exerted over the productive process; it is here that the geographical and historical variations appear.

At the most abstract level Beti concepts of gender were built on three premises: the fundamental difference between male and female qualities, the difference in sequential position of male and female tasks in activity structures, and marriage as the means of bringing these together to create wealth and well-being. The distinction between men's and women's nature is between force on the one hand and fertility on the other (Laburthe-Tolra 1981:270-281). Male nature involves domination, women's involves gestation and increase. In the sequences of activities which generate wealth, male tasks are thought of as initiating and consumating productive processes, while women's tasks are intermediate and gestational. The following simple alliterative statement given to me about farming - that the man, *a li, a di:* he clears, he eats - could stand symbolically for the reproduction of children and the creation of wealth in general. Finally, the creativity of male-female complementarity is exclusively realized in marriage. A man without a wife may "do the work" of clearing new fields or impregnating a woman, but this does not establish a claim on the product; he is a *zeze mot*, a nobody. Likewise, a woman's work only has a structural meaning within marriage; as a daughter, her productive life is entirely contained within that of her mother, and although her sexual life might be very free, any children she bore were generally low status, *tsali* (rubbish; literally, saliva), within her father's group. In cultural terms, male action opens and closes cycles of growth and accumulation. In social terms, the initial assertive act legitimates a husband's claims on the ultimate product. In technical terms, these tasks define the minimum input of a married man into production.

By contrast with other general animating concepts, such as the nature of kin identity (see Moore 1978), concepts of gender tend to imply very specific behavior. They set the framework for the use of tools, daily routines, location and mobility, appropriate modes of self-presentation, gesture and action, all of which structure the most repetitive aspects of social life. They are not only grist for the judicial mill or the on-going process of regulating social life; they are lived in a constant, insistent, intimate fashion. They do not, however, specify forms of organization in the same insistent manner. Gender differences are expressable in terms of the generic Man and Woman, but the terms of any particular relationship, the group organization in which it is embedded and the mutual implications of the different activity patterns in productive work are not direct deductions. The ideological notion of complementarity has to be broken down into its different organizational attributes: terms, scale, synchrony/sequencing of activities, and, finally, aggregate patterns of functioning. The terms of the relationship define how much each party to it puts in and gets out, the means by which this is arrived at, its cultural validation. The scale defines the size of the group in which this is realized, and its internal demographic and status structure. Synchrony defines the sequence structure and forms of task interdependence between men and women; this is a

crucial process since its enactment reaffirms the cultural and ideological propositions on a daily, repetitive basis, without the intervention of those ritual and social events, such as court cases and rites of passage, by which other principles are symbolized and implemented.

These dimensions of organization are more variable than the cultural framework or techniques of production. The terms of relationships and the scale of organization are the attributes through which one can trace most clearly the interactions with overall political and economic structures; and synchrony is the attribute through which ecological and productive implications can be traced most directly. These suggestions should not be seen as hypotheses about complex interactions, but rather as a strategy for exploring the links between power and production. I want to suggest that in the Beti farming system relatively small shifts in practice can disaggregate an integrated sequence of complementary tasks into two sequences which are essentially analogs rather than complements. This possibility has a material and cultural basis, and a political and organizational context. It has been embedded in the system for as long as we can reconstruct, has been increasingly realized during the twentieth century. It is this coexistence and interaction of an ideology of the complementarity of male and female qualities, institutions ensuring the subordinate status of female activities, and a productive practice which is potentially analogical, which gives the process of change its particular character.

To see where and how this can happen requires examination of the division of labor in its cultural, social, and technical-material dimensions, with particular attention to regional variants. The rest of this chapter is devoted to five "maps" of agricultural production, distribution, and consumption which, when superimposed to show their mutual implications, reveal the contours of male-female complementarity: the cultural and social context of the division of labor; tools, techniques and the field system; the organization of work; control of the product; and finally, consumption.[4]

Farming and the Division of Labor

Male activities were thought of in terms of warfare, hunting and tree-felling, however much or little time was spent in each. The male tools were iron and wood: the spear (*akǫŋ*), the hatchet (*ovon*) and the long planter (*ntǫŋ*). The male activities carried explicit military and phallic symbolism, involving cutting down and building up, as with yam stakes and house poles. Men worked upright, climbed palm trees to tap the wine or cut the fruit, prepared the tree-trunk barriers around the newly cut fields (*mefub;* sing. *afub*), and the picket storehouses for yams (*mekak;* sing. *akak*). The male milieu was the forest (*afan*), the source of the wood for tools and the most prestigious meat for the diet, the site of the hunt, the terrain to be conquered to open up a new field or prepare a new village site. The crops associated with male labor and male ownership were tree

[4]This data has been presented in slightly different form in Guyer 1980b.

crops, crops of the forest fields, and crops which could be grown with the *ntǫŋ*, the long-handled digging stick.

Women's milieu was, by contrast, the earth itself, the open clearings or the savanna (*nlǫŋ*). A woman worked the fields, bending over the earth with her short-handled hoe (*ebak, ekǫp*). She cooked in earthenware pots, bending over the fire, fished by building earth dams across streams, bending into the water to trap the fish, and she "cooked" babies in her womb. Bending over the earth to tend to it, shape it, and coax it to produce was woman's activity and woman's attitude. Her crops were the savanna crops, planted with the woman's tool, the hoe.

The oppositions of forest and savanna, digging stick and hoe, wood and earth, upright and bending, dominant stance and submissive shaping, gave the opposition of male and female both enormous power and concrete content. The sexuality and fertility of marriage brought the sets of oppositions together, conceptually but also organizationally.

The basic productive enterprise could, theoretically, be launched with only one adult man and one wife. In fact, this may have been a more common pattern in earlier periods and certainly the term for a village or hamlet (*dzal* in Ewondo, *tan* in Eton), can apply to such a small unit. The simplest complete production unit therefore consisted of the members of a hamlet, centered around an independent man, that is, a man who had passed the initiation ritual (*sso*), had cleared his own forest field, married, built his own house (*aba'a*) and a house for his wife (*nda*). In his hamlet a man was *mot dzal*, man of the hamlet, *nti*, a "seigneur," *ntomba*, a person due respect. For most purposes this was an independent unit, cooperating with other like units related by patrilineal descent only in ritual and military contexts (see Quinn 1981).

The larger descent unit, with a named ancestor, could be known simply as *nda bot*, house of people, or as *mvog*, a family or settlement. There were generally certain recognized positions within the larger descent unit - the *ntol*, the eldest son of the eldest son, and the *ndoze*, the spokesman - but their powers and the use of the terminology of segmentation was imprecise and situational.[5]

The large village of a polygynous headman of the late nineteenth century was clearly a different form of organization, and was known as *mbama*, rather than the simple *dzal*. The wives' houses were ranged in two rows on either side of a large open court, headed by the *aba'a* of the *nkukuma*. Starting from five or six wives, and going up to forty, fifty or more, the *mot dzal* was considered *nkukuma*, a rich man or chief. The term *akuma* applied above all to wealth in people, a wealth which, in this case, could only be acquired through marriage.

The greatest elaboration of the polygynous model was developed in the northern Eton and Manguissa regions, on the savanna-border. It was least elaborated in the deep forest south of the River Nyong and into the Bulu area. In the early years of this century, Tessmann noted that the upper limit in the number of wives per headman in the south was about thirty, while on the savanna-forest border the number went up to as high as a hundred (Tessmann 1913:262).

[5]For a detailed discussion of the Beti descent system, see Laburthe-Tolra 1981.

Along with the greater number of wives in the polygynous system went a systematically greater control over their activities, and over production and consumption. This was a major variant within the general framework set by the cultural and technical oppositions of the division of labor. The expansion of the scale of activities in the north seems to have been associated with an intensification of land use and labor input, the heightening of control over distribution and consumption and some cultural elaborations on the division of labor. The southern pattern involved not only smaller groups of co-wives, but also greater recognition of the rights of component units of larger groups, the former retaining certain control over the work and the harvest.

Tools, Techniques and the Field System

Like most African cultivation systems, the Beti system contained a variety of possible crop combinations and field types, but fundamentally it was a two-field system which reflected the savanna-border ecology of their original homeland. *Esep* was a large field, opened up in the forest, fenced with the felled tree-trunks against the depradations of wild animals, and burned during the long dry season (December to February) from which it gets its name.[6] *Esep* was considered a man's creation; all the associations of manhood with the forest, the axe, the planter (*ntǫŋ*), and sheer physical strength supported this. Opening up an *esep* field was one of the proofs of manhood (Ngoa 1968:193).

By contrast, the *afub owondo*, the groundnut field, was made in open clearings or savanna areas, was worked with the short-handled hoe, and was female in all its connotations. It was smaller than *esep*, intensively worked, and closely interplanted.

In addition to these two basic pillars of the farming system, there were several other kinds of fields which made relatively small, or optional, contributions to total production. All villages had small gardens in the *falag*, the immediate periphery, where medicinal plants, tobacco and some plantains might be grown. These permanent plots were asssociated with the headman or other married men of the village. Other minor fields were distinguished from *esep* and the groundnut field in that all were monocropped and/or single season plots; since farming techniques were based on intercropping, most mono-cropped fields were, by definition, single-season fields, or the last phase in the return to fallow. *Elǫbi* is a dry season field in marshy or river-bank land; *asan* is a dry season or monocropped plot, whose basic meaning has been rather obscured by its appropriation for forced rice cultivation during the colonial period; and many crops can be grown alone, in plots known simply as *afub* (field) plus the name of the crop (*afub fǫn*: a maize plot; *afub mebuda*: a sweet potato plot). For crops such as maize, where cultivation was possible without hoeing, men frequently made these minor plots for themselves. What is minor about them is not neces-

[6]The Beti term *esep* will not be translated, simply because all the possible terms (dry-season field, forest field, men's field, melon-seed field, etc., or some combination of these) are inexact, or unwieldy, and could indicate other field types as well as *esep*.

sarily their contribution to total production or their potential for increased importance under changed conditions, but their marginality with respect to the accumulation of wealth and the re-enactment of the structure of the gender division of labor.

When the two-field system was adapted to a more exclusively forest environment, the fields became stages in a single cultivation cycle. *Esep* was the means of opening up the forest. Its most important crop, melon-seeds (*ngǫn*) was then planted very summarily using the planter, without any prior working of the soil. The thick vines soon covered the entire area, including the felled tree-trunks left to rot and the ashes of burned undergrowth. They protected the soil, hastened the rotting of organic matter and gave a rich harvest of edible seeds in the following November at the end of a long growing season.

After the harvest, the clearing was known as *kundu* for a year or two, that is, a plot ready for making a groundnut field. When it was to be returned to active cultivation for groundnuts, the women completely cleaned out the field, and systematically hoed the soil as they planted the seed. After the groundnut harvest the field was known as *bindi*, or *binda*, and if no more crops were planted on it, it reverted over two years to secondary bush, *ekodog*, fallow.[7] A plot was in fallow for the fifteen years it took for the forest to re-establish itself enough to make the land available for another *esep*.

In the forest environment the groundnut field was dependent on the previous cycle of *esep* because this prepared the plot and the earth itself for intensive clearing and working. It is unproductive, if not impossible, to hoe newly cleared forest land because of the extensive root systems in the soil. Once opened up, however, the dependence was less complete because groundnut fallow could be reworked. A complete cycle of cultivation, from *esep* to *esep*, took between twenty and twenty-five years, but it could be short-circuited to give a repeating seven or eight year cycle of groundnut fields, grown on groundnut-fallow land rather than *kundu*, *esep* - fallow land. This simple short-circuiting process could attenuate the interdependence of male and female labor. Wherever a village settled on the same site for an extended period, this possibility could be realized much more frequently. In the pre-colonial period the population was gradually moving southwards, so it seems likely that many groundnut-fallows were abandoned and new *esep* fields opened up elsewhere. A set of fields might be opened up at some distance from the village, and used as both a refuge in case of warfare and a point over which to leap-frog to a new site. Wherever the long cycle predominated, the work of men was a regular technical prerequisite to the work of women.

In terms of the nutritional and cultural value of the crops, the two fields had pronounced analogical qualities. Each field type grew a high-value, storable oil seed and several varieties of

[7]The terms *kundu* and *ekodog* will be glossed as *esep*-fallow and groundnut-fallow, respectively. The Western concept of fallow, used without qualification, does not make adequate distinctions among fields, and moreover, gives the impression that there are no crops at all in the fallow field. Indigenous terms indicate stages in a long cycle of land use, and thereby also indicate the kinds of claims different people can legitimately make on the plot.

starch; each contained valued crops which entered into prestige exchange - groundnuts, melon-seeds, and yams.[8] (See Appendix C for indigenous and botanical terms.) Melon-seed was the valuable *esep* crop; the starchy staples were the classics of the humid tropics, plantain, taro, cocoyam and sugar cane. Other crops might be added in small amounts, including yams, maize and vegetables. The groundnut field grew groundnuts for oil and vegetable protein, maize, cassava, some yams and other vegetables. Each field type could provide the basis for a minimally adequate diet, in both cultural and nutritional terms, without recourse to the other. In fact, some of the crops had varieties which could be grown in either field in small amounts if necessary or desired. For example, in the northern savanna, a variety of melon-seed known as *omgbalak* or *omgbas* could be grown in the groundnut field rather than in *esep*. The large-leafed shade-giving plants such as plantain and cocoyam, normally limited to *esep*, could also be added to the groundnut field once the groundnuts themselves had been harvested, that is, on *bindi* land. Likewise, certain varieties of yam could be grown in *esep* fields, against tree trunks and in spots where the ash from burning was particularly concentrated. Only groundnuts could not be transferred from one field type to another. Table 1 summarizes the rotation pattern of the basic field system.

The northern cultivation system contained another major field type, the *afub bikǫdǫ*, or yam field. Elsewhere yams were grown in both types of field. Yams were highly valued, and are often mentioned as a "noble crop" (Laburthe-Tolra 1981:147) but the deep forest is not the best environment for large-scale production. The real yam cultivators were the Eton, Manguissa and other groups to the north of the present site of Yaoundé. Here, whole fields or sections of fields were devoted to the most prized varieties, *sing-ili* and *kpędę*,[9] with the mounds in rows and the different varieties separated by alleys.

The yam field was flexible as to its place in the field system. Yams could be grown at the stage between *esep* and the groundnut field on land known as *kundu* in Ewondo; there is no equivalent term in Manguissa. It could also precede groundnuts on a new plot made on groundnut fallow land. In the fine alluvial soil of the Manguissa area, the valued variety known as *kpędę* could be grown on a section of the *esep*; the latter is referred to as *ekpak* in the Eton and Manguissa dialects. Wherever yams were grown they required access to sunlight, and mounds made by hoeing, so that in most respects they belonged to the savanna and the female sphere. Women made the mounds, and weeded the field. On the other hand, men participated in cultivation by cutting the stakes for the vines, and harvesting the crop.

[8]Many of the sayings and proverbs collected by Tsala, and which refer to food and farming, elaborate on the yam and melon-seed elements. For example: to leave on a journey without a yam in one's bag, is to set out without preparation (1975:78); to guard the yam storehouse like a lizard, is to work for nothing (1975:123); the death of the melon throws suspicion on the maize, means that after a misfortune the first suspicions fall on the nearest neighbor (1975:125).

[9]The varieties of yam which can be identified are listed in Appendix C. It requires botanical expertise to distinguish yam varieties; the indigenous terminology may not make the same distinctions as the botanical classification, and, in addition, one is dealing with types which are no longer cultivated, in an area where the dialect differences in terminology for all cultigens are quite divergent. Given these problems I list only the major types.

Table 1:
The Beti Field System

Indigenous Term	Duration (years)	Land	Basic Crops
Esep	1-2	Forest	Melon-seed, plantain, taro
Kundu	0-2	Harvested esep	Remaining plantain, taro
Afub Owondo	1/2	Savanna, harvested esep, secondary bush	Groundnuts, cassava, maize, vegetables
Bindi	0-2	Harvested groundnut field	Cassava, minor crops
Ekodog	3-5 15 ↓ ↓ afub owondo ↓ esep	Secondary bush (fallow)	Remaining cassava

Given the division of labor by tool and activity, yams grown in separate plots were the only crop which absolutely required coordinated complementarity of male and female tasks. For yams there was no relatively self-contained analogical component of the production process, but rather a fully integrated sequence of tasks. This becomes clearer when one looks at each field type in terms of the work process, that is, the interdigitation of male and female tasks, individual and group work.

The Organization of Work

Tools and field types defined the complementarities of the sexes in production. Men hunted and made *esep* fields; women worked their groundnut fields. In fact, women did more tasks and shouldered a larger work load than such a symmetrical division implies. Beyond the key initiating tasks, a great deal of what we would define as work, based on a calculus of time spent, was done by women.[10]

After an *esep* field was opened up by the men, the gender division of the labor for the subsequent tasks was flexible; they could

[10]Time and effort, used as measures, have always given different profiles of work input (see Dovring 1967). This can become a polemic issue with respect to male and female work and returns to labor, since women spend more time working in a great many systems, and men may be said to expend more effort. Unless productivity measures for each separate activity can be devised, this issue is unresolvable by measurement and will always have an intrinsic interpretive component.

be done by men or women. Planting melon-seeds involved a male ritual component, the observation of sexual abstinence the previous day, and the planting of certain magical herbs to ensure fertility. However, women might also join in, or take over, the task of planting. Tending the field was not a major activity because the thick vines choked out the weeds. Whatever care was given to the other crops - plantain and cocoyam - was generally given by the women. The harvest was much more demanding. Men and women worked together to collect up the fruit which men split open and bruised to make the extraction of the seed easier. Women took out the seeds, washed them in the river and dried them in the sun in the village courtyard, ready for storage. If female labor was unavailable to a particular man, it was feasible for him to carry out all the *esep* cultivation tasks. In terms of time input, *esep* could therefore cover the spectrum from largely female to largely male labor, but in terms of significant effort, judged in cultural terms, it was unambiguously man's work.

By contrast, the cultivation of a groundnut plot was entirely female. Women doctored their own seeds with various medicines (*meballa*) ensure their fertility, and themselves had intercourse the night before beginning planting to strengthen the effect (Laburthe-Tolra 1981:281). Women hoed and planted the field, weeded, and harvested without any male labor input. If the undergrowth on *esep*-fallow or groundnut-fallow land was not heavy enough to require the use of an axe, a woman often did the clearing and burning herself as well.

As a result, the normal work profiles for men and women on the two basic fields were quite different; male labor was characterized by intensive peaks, followed by longer periods when there were no pressing agricultural tasks, whereas female labor showed a much steadier, regular effort. The first pattern was also characteristic of the labor requirements of *esep*, the latter of the groundnut field. The tasks which made these two patterns interdependent in a single integrated productive process were very limited and specific. A man could not be totally responsible for the *esep* cycle because effective storage of the melon-seed in a humid environment required access to a woman's kitchen; if a single man did make his own *esep* field, it was usually as a contribution for bridewealth payment, so the harvest was given away rather than stored for any length of time. A woman could not open the cycle of cultivation because she could not wield the axe to clear the virgin forest. Any change which reduced the need for either of these tasks could effectively lead to the disengagement of the two fields, male and female work, into separate productive endeavors, without any drastic change in the cropping pattern.

As has been discussed already, the yam fields of the north require coordination of male and female tasks. Heaping and weeding required the hoe, whereas planting, staking and harvesting required the long planter. As occasional crops, grown on a small scale, yams could survive changed conditions of availability for male and female labor, but not as a major staple. Once a population has begun to abandon yams, it is also difficult to make a comeback because of the limited availability of seed yams; the pre-colonial Beti cultivated yam varieties in the past which are not seen today.

In the view of Eton and Manguissa informants, yam cultivation on a large scale could only flourish with polygyny. Since every woman worked a groundnut field every year, the time spent on yam heaping and weeding was additional, and had to be found in a season of maximum labor demand (March and May). A man should ideally be able to draw on the labor of several wives for his yam farm, rather than depending on one. In the case of yams, the scale of work organization had its own effect on production possibilities. Its effect on the basic two-field system was more limited.

In large villages, the organization of work assumed a group/individual dimension in association with the male/female dimension. The male labor for clearing *esep* was done by the dependents of the headman, whether he was simply a *mot dzal*, the eldest of a set of kinsmen, or *nkukuma*, a polygynous village leader. The work was done for him, and sometimes without his participating at all. A rich man, it was said, could withdraw from work; he might not even know where his fields were.

When *esep* plots were opened up by the men of a settlement working together, they could be vast, but they were not necessarily worked by group labor throughout the year. In some regions they were divided up into plots allotted to individual men, or to the wives of the headman, for all subsequent cultivation tasks prior to the harvest. The most radical division was described to me in the Bulu area in the south. Corresponding to a more limited development of polygyny, it appears that descent units were still organized for collective production. The *esep* field was divided among the heads (*kaasǫ*) of the constituent families of the settlement and worked independently. Further north, large *esep* fields were usually kept in group labor through the harvest, a practice which supported the headman's primary claim on the product.

By contrast, the groundnut field was an entirely individual affair. After the melon-seed harvest, the *esep* -fallow was divided up among the wives, each receiving her own individual plot. The crop and the plot itself, as groundnut-fallow, would subsequently be identified with the particular woman who had farmed it. Women could exchange labor among themselves, but the only exception to the rule of individual female farms was the joint farm of a girl and her mother, mother-in-law, or senior co-wife. Joint farming was part of education rather than a variant on productive organization. Every married woman, which in effect meant every adult woman, had to be provided with her own fields and her own kitchen for food preparation.

It seems doubtful that a larger scale of productive activities in the basic field system allowed true efficiencies or an increased total productivity. Although the evidence is scanty, the process of growth seems linear and additive. The specialization of labor within larger groups was more developed than in smaller groups. Ngoa describes different roles assigned to wives, the first wife (*ekomba*) the favorite wife (*mkpəg*) , the water carriers or servants, the personal attendant and so on (1968:208-212). But there is no evidence of a division of labor among women in farming. At its least powerful, the expanded organization was simply a larger version of the smaller operation, with the single innovation that the polygynous headman was able to pool a large number of individual surpluses by virtue of his position as the husband. Much greater

wealth was apparent because it was pooled, but little new wealth was created. The northern variant may have achieved a greater increase in total production if yam cultivation expanded disproportionately beyond a certain minimal number of wives per married man. *Esep* and the groundnut field probably expanded *pari passu* with the number of clients, sons and wives.

There were, of course, advantages of scale, even if there were no returns to scale. Only a very powerful man in the regional political networks could accumulate large numbers of wives and keep them. External and internal power reflected one another, and there is some evidence that in areas of particularly high polygyny rates, headmen had particularly strong rights in the products of the farms worked by their wives and clients. Scale therefore had certain implications, if not for the total product, at least for the relative shares of a man and his wives.

Control of Products

By virtue of the rights in his wife and in his own person which he acquired through marriage, and reaffirmed through the performance of key tasks, a man could claim rights to all wealth produced in his *dzal*, his settlement. Everything which could enter into *akuma*, wealth, ultimately reverted to the headman since his work was seen as the precondition of all productive life. In fact, however, village economies were not necessarily managed by fiat. Different material products entered into wealth to different degrees, so that the effective system of control contained different kinds of claim. Almost all material products which could be designated as wealth could also be allotted for day to day consumption. Hence there were further rubrics beyond the power of the headman, for assigning shares.

Wealth consisted essentially of dependents, and of the goods which could be used to acquire rights in them. The most important material items of this kind in late nineteenth century Beti society were the bundles of iron rods (*bikie*) which constituted the central bridewealth payment, and these were produced and controlled by men. However, a variety of other goods, including the storable, high value crops, entered into wealth. The inclusion of melon-seeds, groundnuts and yams as items of wealth precludes defining the prestige/subsistence distinction as entirely corresponding to the distinction between food and manufactured items.[11] The category of wealth goods and subsistence goods overlapped considerably. The actual system of distribution between the headman, who was oriented to using them as wealth, and his dependents, who were using them for food or personal consumption, must therefore have affected the possibilities for active accumulation. The headman could not necessar-

[11]In the classic discussions of spheres of exchange (Bohannan 1955), under "normal" conditions subsistence goods fall into different spheres; conversions across the boundaries are a function of altered conditions. The Beti system was not as clear-cut as this, at least by the end of the nineteenth century. Certain food crops could circulate in the prestige sphere, and the iron-rod currency used for bridewealth could be used for other purchases. Changing modes of control over exchange seems more characteristic of this system than a generally accepted set of cultural categories.

ily always play the trump card of his ultimate power. The regional variations in patterns of distribution run parallel to the variations in polygyny.

All crops from *esep* belonged initially to the headman who had initiated cultivation. The perishable crops destined for immediate consumption, were available for use to the entire group, or alternatively devolved on the woman to whom the section had been allotted for a subsequent groundnut field. The melon-seed itself was highly prized. The headman kept a large proportion of the crop in his own storehouse for use in feasting, for exchange and for seed. The remainder was given out in shares to his wives, to keep in their kitchens for routine consumption. Throughout the region, the division of the melon-seed crop into shares was done by the headman, not the individual cultivators. The share he chose to keep was stored in the house of the favorite wife, the *mkpəg*.

A portion of the groundnut harvest was also stored for use by the headman. But in this case, the division into shares was generally made by the individual woman farmer. Each groundnut crop was unambiguously an individual achievement, and constituted one measure of a wife's capacity to increase the wealth of her husband. Spread out to dry in front of her kitchen, a woman's groundnut crop was, like the number of her children, a display of worth. The portion which she was able to contribute to the store in the house of the *mkpəg* was a matter of personal pride and status within the village. The process was more than a utilitarian distribution or an authoritarian appropriation. If she was left a widow, the value of her contributions to her husband's wealth would be publicly discussed and might weigh in decisions about her future as an inherited wife. The modicum of individual control which women had over the labor and the product of their groundnut fields therefore entered into the establishment of a status system among the wives.

Where yams entered into wealth, it was only those varieties grown by men in their large fields.[12] The varieties which were intercropped in the women's fields were kept by each woman in her own storehouse (*akak*) behind her kitchen. Men owned the yams grown in the yam fields, and a man's storehouse was inaccessible to his wives without permission. In the Manguissa and northern Eton areas, women were never allowed access, under any conditions, to the storehouse for *kpẹdẹ*, the most highly valued yam, which was grown in *ekpak*, the local equivalent of *esep*. The owner gave them out, piecemeal, for cooking, for presentation to visitors and for ceremonial exchange. Nursing women were not allowed to eat this kind of yam at all. The jointly-worked yam plots were therefore the clearest case of women contributing labor to a productive process in whose output they had very limited rights. For the other two field types, there were procedures for dividing the wealth from the food which, at their most limited, did leave women with a share of the high value output, and at their most liberal, gave a certain amount of recognition.

[12]The most important distinction here was between the varieties with a compound leaf, always grown in women's fields, which were of lower value, and the varieties with a single leaf, generally grown in men's fields, which were higher value.

In terms of the dynamics of accumulation, melon-seed was a particularly important component of wealth because it was one of the narrow range of items which a man could acquire for himself to pay bridewealth. Groundnuts and yams demanded female labor for production and therefore could not be grown by an unmarried man. Iron-rod currency in the amounts needed circulated mainly among the rich. *Ngɔn* (melon-seed) is, in fact, a close homonym for the term for a young woman, and Tessmann quotes a poor man explaining that "I see this plant like a girl" (1913:94) because he could use it to marry a wife.[13] Melon-seed, hunted game, and gambling gains constituted gaps in the otherwise firm control of wealth by already established wealthy headmen.

Women therefore had some rights in valued products, largely on the basis of their groundnut fields. Dominated as production certainly was by men, there were nevertheless areas of productive life over which male control was less direct, such as the perishable crops and the items of wealth in which women's rights received recognition, in however limited a context. The individuation of work on the groundnut field, from planting to harvesting, seems everywhere to have given women the right to display and distribute the harvest, albeit within the narrow limits set by their husbands' general rights to everything produced. In the Eton region, people mentioned women making independent exchanges of their groundnuts to acquire hoes. The system of food taboos described in the following section, showing women's limited access to certain items, serves to highlight the ambiguity of groundnuts in the food/prestige, female/male definition of goods produced.

Food Preferences and Taboos

In the past, the enormously rich Beti diet contained male and female, adult and dependent variants, maintained partly by cultural preferences and partly by direct taboos.

Foods eaten raw, such as fruit, were associated with women and children. A man should eat food cooked by his wife, and should have the self-control to go without for long periods rather than snack on whatever came to hand. Among the cooked foods, the highly preferred food offered to honored visitors included yams, in some areas certain kinds of plantain, groundnuts, melon-seed, and meat from the hunt. The preferred kind of complement was a dish known as *nnam*, made in a leaf package. *Nnam owondo* and *nnam ngɔn* (of groundnuts and melon-seeds respectively) consisted of ground and seasoned seeds, steamed in a leaf packet and eaten as a kind of cake. Sauces were not of high enough value to offer to guests if they contained no meat or fish, even if there was groundnut or melon-seed as a thickener. In the north certain high value meat dishes were also cooked in leaf packets. For example a man from near Saa described cooking *mvu beti* (local dog) by spicing, wrapping in banana leaves and burying overnight over smouldering coals, a delicacy known as *ndombe*.

Women were allowed to eat all the high value vegetable foods, with the exception of *kpɛdɛ* yams in the north which were forbidden

[13]Poor men could also build up herds of small livestock through animal loan arrangements, and these goats could be used for bridewealth payments.

to nursing mothers. However, cassava was considered their particular staple, as were the sauces containing the products to which they had greatest access: cassava leaves (*kpem*), all other kinds of leaf vegetables (*bitetam:* okra; *təgə;* leaf vegetables; *lombo:* young cocoyam leaves; wild mushrooms; etc.) and the fish they caught in the streams. Their greatest area of disability was in meat consumption, which was fraught with prohibitions. Again, the north appears to have had the most extensive list of forbidden meats, including (1) domestic animals: goat (*kabat*), sheep (*ntomba*) and dog (*mvu beti*), all of which were wealth (*akuma*) and could enter into bridewealth; (2) meats restricted only to the old and spiritually strong, such as the meat of the viper (*akpe*); and (3) locally specific, and often temporary, interdictions having to do with pregnancy and the effects of certain meats on the subsequent health of the child. Women might cook these foods, but had to ask a man to test the seasoning, or taste them herself and then spit them out. Certain of the products of male labor in animal husbandry and the hunt were therefore inaccessible to women. The products of their own labor were at the disposal of their husbands.

Here again, however, the separation of women from wealth was neither total nor uniform throughout the region. In the south, people claimed that women were allowed to eat goat and mutton, although an authority such as Abbé Tsala thought that the taboo was general throughout the Beti area. People also suggested that women might control, if not own, certain items of wealth, young goats, chickens and groundnuts, which a husband could not easily take by force. Women also had their own storehouses for taro (*metu*), different kinds of yams (*mendia* and *bikɔ̱dɔ̱*), and sugar cane (*minkɔ̱k*). Ngoa suggests in his list of types of marriage in the southern region that a woman might even pay her son's bridewealth with her own property, known as *"aluk zig mɔ̱"* or *"aluk mbo mɔ̱,"* marriage by the rubbing or the exploitation of one's hands (Ngoa 1968:195). The marriage of a son could be the first step in a woman's total emancipation from her own marriage because if she was past child-bearing she could establish herself in her son's village. From there, she was emancipated enough that she was not expected to observe the rituals of widowhood when her husband died. In the north, woman's own wealth was more limited. They could keep chickens, and stored their own groundnuts and yams.

These areas of access to wealth, seemingly so restricted in the products they cover, the amounts involved, and the realistic possibilities for using them to acquire influence or independence, nevertheless cannot be eliminated from consideration because they provide those areas of overlap and ambiguity, the cracks in a highly consistent and powerful cultural and political system, which can emerge as central issues under changed conditions.

If there is a single theme in the identity and value of women's work in the production system, it is in their relationship to the groundnut field, one of their few means of wealth and status, a weak area in an otherwise male monopoly of all sources of wealth and power.

One must not, however, leave the impression that daily life in the late nineteenth century was particularly difficult in material terms for either men or women. The farming day lasted until about noon. In the early afternoon the women prepared the main meal of

the day, eaten well before dark. All the sources agree that the diet was immensely varied, drawing on hunting, gathering and cultivation. In 1889, as his own presence heralded the beginning of a new era, the German officer Von Morgen described "a region more teeming in game than any I have ever seen" as he crossed the Eton country towards the Sanaga River (1972:47). The "Yaunde," he wrote, enjoyed a joyful and carefree life, "the rise of the moon seemed to give a signal for music and dancing in the villages" (1972:41), and he nostalgically regretted leaving "this idyllic milieu" (1972:42). He depicted women selling surpluses from their fields to the German post for beads, taking part in ceremonial occasions with enthusiasm and abandon, and playing the flute. Unlike his host, Georg Zenker (Laburthe-Tolra 1970), Von Morgen certainly missed the key ritual and judicial acts through which male authority was give dramatic and sometimes brutal expression. The presentation of both aspects of pre-colonial Beti life has been a challenge ever since, between the constraints on dependents, including women, on the one hand, and certain kinds of material ease and freedom on the other; we are trying, as Laburthe-Tolra puts it, "to find a path between the dance of some and the violence of others" (1981:200). Whichever interpretive gloss is put on the Beti past, the picture is still remarkably different from that painted by a colonial administrator in the southern Bulu region in the aftermath of the great Depression. The women, he said, were "morally degraded by a long history of servitude" (Bertaut 1935:172).

In the pre-colonial system, the inequalities between men and women were all enclosed within a productive system which ensured a high level of material well-being. The grafting on of new forms of appropriation and new levels of surplus mobilization during the early colonial period ratchetted these levels downward and at the same time opened up new rifts in the differential control of agricultural output.

Discussion

The superimposed set of descriptive maps of the productive cycle, each with its regional variants, reveals which aspects of the system were powerfully internally consistent and relatively uniform, and which points were open to some negotiation, variation and possible manipulation under different accumulative dynamics. One sees the possibility of a precipitation of male and female activities into two cycles which touch at two major points, the point of initiation and the point of distribution. There is enough variation at these points to suggest that they might contain areas of negotiability. The least control granted to women coincides with the most integrated and synchronized task sequencing between the sexes, and also with higher rates of polygyny, greater military activity, and a savanna environment.

This analysis suggests the importance of examining the dynamics of organization and control separate from the ideological blueprint, not just because this can fill out a model of "the system," but because it is on the basis of those processes that change occurs, and therefore that one can see, not the two simple alternatives of breakdown or continuity, but the form into which larger units can break down or the specific features which constitute continuity.

It is here that I find the otherwise powerful models built by Meillassoux and Rey of the lineage mode of production to be weakest. The critical relationships have been well posited; senior men control labor through the control of bridewealth goods and marriage, and production itself involves an ideology of complementarity and subordination "in such a way that production cannot be continued without it" (Rey 1979:48). However, the insistence on the primacy of these basic relations of production has tended to draw attention away from the need to develop other analytical concepts and methods, at a more concrete level, with which to examine the variation and dynamics in the interaction of social relations and productive practice. It matters for the analysis of production and distribution patterns, whether the demographic accumulative imperative suggested by Meillassoux (1981) was realized primarily through descent relations or through polygynous marriage and clientship. Polygyny on a large scale offered one new productive possibility, provided a basis for higher rates of internal accumulation, and extended the exchange network. It also matters for accumulative dynamics that the conceptual distinction between wealth and food was unclear; those who controlled *akuma* and processes of accumulation had not only to protect the goods already in circulation, but to limit the definition of what could and could not enter into that category under changing conditions of trade, and also to protect the criteria of eligibility of access. In the Beti system, the latter two constituted potential areas of competition. Some goods produced by one's own work could enter into both categories and therefore provided a slim opportunity for an enterprizing man to initiate his own accumulation. The use of items of wealth in gambling provided another chink in the structures of control, because, again, young men could acquire bridewealth goods through their own efforts. The control of both wealth and subsistence goods was an on-going process, not directly derivative from the structural properties of the system. In other words, the analysis of dynamics requires attention to the bases for, and implications of, different organizational forms of "control," as well as to its dyadic structure.

The power of "elders," while real and unambiguous at the general ideological level, did not preclude the existence of culturally sanctioned rights at more specific levels, from which dependents could pursue greater areas of discretion for themselves. Different products presented different possibilities. Variation requires some theoretical and empirical exploration, otherwise, as Burnham puts it, "it may seem that one African 'peasant' economy is much like another and that general explanations of economic and social change will suffice" (1980). The capacity of a particular structure to give rise to more than one form of organization has been explored by Friedman (1975) and Comaroff (1983), both of whom include productive patterns in their models. These are important contributions. The problem for my own concerns is that the technical aspects of production tend still to be seen as "limit conditions of the technical reproduction of the social system" (Friedman 1975:83), that is, they emerge into prominence only as the situation reaches these limits. In Africa, as Comaroff points out, internal tendencies towards the limits were cut into by colonial conquest. One wants, therefore, to know more about the area inside the limits, not just in sociopolitical terms, but in terms of production. Southern Cameroon was sub-

ject to quite radical experimentation in administrative organization and taxation under colonial rule, but without this setting up either a downward spiral of ecological decline or totally new patterns of specialist production and inter-regional trade. Since I argue that the groundnut rotation is an important element in this resilience, the following chapter explores the range of colonial conditions grafted onto it and the nature of the shifts which did take place.

Chapter 3

COLONIAL TRANSFORMATIONS

In Southern Cameroon, the colonial period can be divided into two phases. It began in 1884 when the coastal Douala made a treaty with the Germans. The structures put in place by the Germans and intensified by the French after 1918, reached a peak of coherence during the 1920s, and then began a long and ragged decline in the wake of the Great Depression of 1929-34. Under the new conditions of 1945, there were rapid changes in policy which resulted in the formation of quite new structures of economic and political control. Each set of conditions placed a different framework on social and economic structures at the local level.

A German post was established in Yaoundé in 1889. It took some years of military and diplomatic activity before the population accepted German rule. Thereafter a formal administrative hierarchy was created, various construction enterprises were launched, and a head tax system was finally put in place in 1908. Throughout this period there was enormous demand for labor in porterage, to which "the healthiest men, women and children" responded, up to an estimated number of 80,000 carriers engaged on the Kribi - Yaoundé route alone in 1913 (Rudin 1938:331,316). Wild rubber tapping, ivory trapping, and processing of palm products were encouraged for export.

The social dynamics of these early changes is not well understood. For example, it is clear that women as well as men worked as porters during both the German and the French periods (Vincent 1976: 100; Buell 1928 II:327). It is difficult to tell, however, whether these people were responding to new opportunities in order to escape headmen's control or in order to implement their orders; possibly both strategies were being pursued by different categories of the population or in different places. The most important administrative chief, Charles Atangana, certainly possessed large plantations by the time he was installed as superior chief (Oberhauptling) of the Beti in 1913. Again, it is not clear how the labor was recruited to work them.[1]

Although radical economic change was initiated in the German period and the chieftaincy hierarchy was developed, the association of the two in the powerful way which characterized the inter-war period did not develop, and for several reasons. First of all, the period during which the Germans had control over the population, through the chiefs, was relatively short. Head tax was only introduced in 1908, following by only three years the introduction of payment in cash to government workers, rather than payment in kind

[1]Atangana was an outstanding figure in Beti political life from the early years of the century until his death in 1943. For biographical studies see Laburthe-Tolra 1977, and Quinn 1980.

(Quinn 1971:93). Secondly, Germany financed the colony with loans and grants-in-aid, so that the pressure to generate internal resources to support colonial development was comparatively light. Tax appears to have been quite low relative to income, 6 marks per year, and porterage wages started at 6 marks per month (Rudin 1938: 334, 341). Finally, the legal measures passed against customary practices were hardly implemented except for those which had involved violence, namely the sacrifice of a widow or slave at the funeral of an important headman, and the male initiation rite, called *Sso* (Quinn 1971: 106-109).

The French administration built on the German structures, reinstated the German chiefs and resumed efforts at economic development. Like the Germans they pronounced on aspects of local custom but adopted a laisser-faire stance when it came to implementation. The chiefs had considerable power to interpret marriage and family law, and tended to protect practices such as high bridewealth payment and widow inheritance which could be employed in the political strategies of acquiring and controlling clients. The major convergence which the French administration achieved during the interwar years was between an administrative and elite policy centered on the indigenous chiefs, and high levels of direct taxation to finance colonial development. During this period Cameroon was entirely self-financed. As a result the tax level was extremely high; head tax alone rose to almost a third of the region's export-earned income by 1929, and to a half by 1934 (Guyer 1980a), and there were compulsory labor taxes (*prestation de travail*) and medical taxes in addition. The structures of production described in the first section of this chapter were forged out of this policy of resource mobilization and from a version of indigenous marriage defined by the new chiefly elite.

The second section describes the post-war period from 1945 to 1960. The colonial strategy moved away from taxation towards commercial and market-based means of mobilizing state resources; in a family budget study done in 1954 direct taxation accounted for only 8 percent of rural cash income (Binet 1956:89). Large amounts of metropolitan loan and investment funds were made available, so that chiefs were expendable as the main means of achieving a balanced budget. Administrative restrictions on population movement were lifted and certain constraints of the pre-war marriage code came under piecemeal, but serious, scrutiny. Widow inheritance and marriage without the woman's consent were banned in 1945 (Melone 1972:51). Most crucially, the *indigénat* system of administrative punishment without trial, which had sanctioned local policy implementation, was abolished throughout the French colonial world. The concomitant changes in aspects of family organization and farming were very marked. Small-holder cocoa production became definitively established at this time.

The "Rural Elite" and the Rural Producers, 1920-1940

Under the French, the chiefs were to fulfil the usual duties of tax collection, recruitment of forced labor, containment of opposition and so on, but they were also to become the nucleus of a rural elite which demonstrated and implemented colonial agricultural

policy.[2] The resources put at their disposal by the government to achieve this were quite meagre, consisting mainly of the backing of the military and the police, and a rebate on taxes. Consequently, the chiefs implemented the policy through a grandiose projection of patriarchal power onto a vast scale, and by making idiosyncratic improvisations on Beti social organization. Their large and complex productive enterprises were remarked by Buell in his survey of African labor published in 1928: "The French Cameroons is almost unique among the territories of Central Africa in that it contains a large number of plantations owned by natives, most of whom are chiefs.... These plantations are particularly widespread in the district of Yaoundé where Charles Atangana and other chiefs have cocoa, palm and foodstuffs plantations upon which hundreds of natives are employed" (1964 II:344).

From the outset, the Yaoundé region (Département du Nyong et Sanaga) was a source of wealth. The major export commodities until well into the 1930s were the products of hunting, gathering and processing rather than cultivation; they included rubber, some ivory, but mainly palm kernels. New cultivated crops introduced for export during the 1920s included coffee and cocoa, and new food crops included rice, to feed the construction crews, and European products to feed the administrators. Cultivation of palms and rubber was instituted to supplement the natural groves in the forest. Each kind of large-scale agricultural enterprise drew on both indigenous and colonial constraints to make it work, and none was lacking in problems and contradictions.

Basically there were only four modes of labor recruitment to the large farms: polygynous marriage, requisition of workers, protection schemes, and collective village labor tax. Each of these posed organizational problems. Accumulation of wives clearly had the deepest resonance with Beti institutions. Under the threat of recruitment to forced labor in railway construction, which was known to have a devastatingly high death rate,[3] families resorted to the politics of affinity. They offered daughters to their chief in return for protection. These large groups of wives, in some cases numbering in the hundreds, then formed the core of the chief's labor force. Wives provided a stable and relatively disciplined work force because the institutions of marriage and women's agricultural labor were already developed.

In the changed political circumstances of colonial rule, however, there was a problem with resorting to the complementary institution of *mvia*, that is, clientship through co-residence with polygynously married wives, to recruit the necessary male labor if the traditional organization of work were to be retained and if tree crop production were to be expanded for export. Some chiefs throughout Southern Cameroon used this institution. Buell described cases in the neighboring Edea region, where men who were unable to pay the high bridewealth went to the chiefs' farms to work and set up domestic relations with the chiefs' wives (1964 II:346).

[2]The creation of an elite was an explicit goal of government policy; through expanded agricultural production to feed the laborers at public works sites, "we will see develop here a new class of landowners, a rural middle class which will be the element of order, calm and reason in indigenous society." (A.R. 1923:77).

[3]Estimates of death rates on the Douala-Yaoundé railway construction sites were the subject of a special study in Kuscynski's examination of the demographic data on Cameroon. From 1922 to 1927 there were between 3,000 and 6,000 workers at the sites, and the annual death rate gradually fell from 100 per thousand p.a. in

However, resort to *mintǫbǫ* (co-resident clients) came under attack from the church, the state and the Christian and monogamous chiefs. The church, of course, was against all marital arrangements which impeded the development of monogamy, whereas the state and the Christian chiefs were tolerant to the point of positive support, of the institutions of polygynous marriage.[4] The *ntǫbǫ* (clientship) status, however, was conceptually distinct. Although Superior Chief Atangana acknowledged that it was an intrinsic component of traditional polygynous marriage, he noted that about fifty had been the maximum number of wives in the past. Polygyny on a much larger scale resulted in moral and political dilemmas; whereas the chiefs and the government both supported the maintenance of the husband's power to discipline wives and their lovers (APA 11954:3.14.27), they also claimed that such systems amounted to a form of organized prostitution for gain which was partially responsible for the spread of venereal diseases (APA 11954:8.7.28). Not that their admonitions necessarily made any difference, but they did put a new complexion on an old practice. At least one polygynous chief, Zogo Fouda Ngono, took the unprecedented measure of forbidding other sexual relations to his wives.

For Christian and monogamous chiefs, there were two alternatives for labor recruitment, apart from a clandestine resort to de facto polygyny. One was simply to retain laborers who had been requisitioned by the government for terms of forced or corvée labor. Forced labor for terms of six months or more was recruited by local chiefs from within their regions on the basis of whatever selection criteria they saw fit to use. Corvée consisted of ten days' work on government projects and was required of all men unless they chose to commute direct service to a cash tax. Although all chiefs on occasion took advantage of *prestataires*, as a regular method of recruiting and controlling productive agricultural labor the method had many drawbacks. Technically any syphoning off of labor due to the government was forbidden, so that any time the administration chose to open the blind eye it usually turned to such practices, the chiefs were vulnerable to disciplinary measures.

More seriously, from the point of view of an agricultural entrepreneur, which several of these chiefs were, it is hardly the most satisfactory arrangement because of the problematic issues of timing and coordinating a circulating labor force, and the difficulty of getting the adult men to accept the humiliation of constraint. A young or junior man could be recruited as *ntǫbǫ* (a client), *olǫ* (a slave) or *mǫngǫ* (a child, dependent) but there was no legitimate indigenous rubric under which one adult man could requisition the work of another. As a result of this, and of the competition between fathers, local chiefs, higher level chiefs and the colonial government for control of the junior male labor force, violence became endemic; as one report put it, "in the whole region, there is hardly an individual invested with the minutest degree of authority who does not oppress and illtreat the unfortunate 'zeze mot', the

1923 to 35 per thousand p.a. in 1927 (1939:162-176). The hospital in Yaoundé admitted about 120 patients a month from the work site (CNA APA 11954).

[4]The officially appointed Council of Notables discussed marriage at the session of 14 March 1927. Several of the members were *grands polygames* themselves. They advised on a high bridewealth to prevent easy divorce by repayment, suggested that a husband could refuse to accept a repayment if he chose, and explained the institution of *mvia*, resident lovers for polygnously married wives. When Atangana protested current practice, it was the scale, not the practice itself, of polygyny which he criticized.

villager" (Eze 1969:314). The term *zeze mot* means a nobody, in distinction from *mfaŋ mot*, a real person, one to be reckoned with. In the conception of the time, a married man would not be *zeze mot*, by definition, because marriage made a man into "somebody." Much of the violence, according to people's recollections, was either over the control of this junior male labor, or, above all, over the insulting treatment of a political opponent or a personal enemy in the manner of a *zeze mot* when their status was that of *mfaŋ mot*. This means of recruitment pitted villager against villager in what must have been an inferno of interpersonal antagonisms. People can still speak with passion on this subject as they remember particular wrongs committed. This cannot have constituted the ideal agricultural work force, and indeed, people speak of workers being tied to one another and being beaten, on some of the chiefs' farms.

One means of stabilizing a large labor force without resort to marriage or force involved the elaboration of a kind of paternal ideology, whereby young men and women were sent by their families as "servants" to the chief. The terminology, *mɔngɔ bisie*, employs the general word for child, young dependent, *mɔngɔ*. Chiefs Atangana and Ateba appear to have resorted to this kind of system to recruit labor to their farms. People also deserted their own chiefs and placed themselves under the protection of another, a position which carried connotations of both *ntɔbɔ* (a client), since it was voluntary, and *olɔ* (a slave), since no domestic arrangement was involved. At its worst, this system amounted to a kind of protection racket because it was the chiefs themselves who maintained such a pitch of fear. On the whole it seems to have been an arrangement which families entered into willingly, especially when the alternatives were so dismal. It drew on the same social dynamics as the elaboration of polygynous marriage.

Finally, some chiefs simply placed their farms in subject villages and delegated the problem of labor recruitment and control to the village headman. In this way, they avoided the problems of a specially recruited labor force, and were generally able to insert their own enterprises into the normal round of both male and female agricultural activities. The problem of this arrangement was in legitimating the final appropriation of the product. Whole regions complained bitterly about the injustice of producing for nothing. For example, the grievances of the Mbidambane against Superior Chief Atangana are reported by Buell (1964 II:327). It was politically risky to give local areas such clear common causes around which to mobilize.

The idioms associating protection with labor service were indigenous, but each chief, in a rather different way, attempted to make them work at a much higher organizational level and on a much greater scale than before, and thereby to extend them to a wholly new kind of "dependent," the adult and independent man. But this extension sowed bitter hatred and dispute. Abbé Tsala recounted an incident which illustrates precisely the issue at stake. A subject of Max Abe Fouda made a public point of defining, as he carried them out, only those obligations to the chief which he owed him as *nkukuma nnam* (chief of the country), or *esia* (father), in explicit distinction from those owed to him as *nkukuma ngobena:* a representative of the governor (Interview 3.15.77). The chiefs clearly tried to counteract this kind of subversion by defining their administra-

tive activities in paternalistic terms. For example, Atangana tried to prevent a complaint from reaching the administration by appealing to his subject's personal obligation not to bring ridicule on his chief in the eyes of outsiders (Abbé Tsala 3.15.77). The chiefs therefore took the idea of the power of an elder or *nkukuma* over his subordinates, and applied it, partially successfully, to a vastly larger and more powerful organizational system. Some of their subjects clung onto its restricted application to smaller social units. The question of who could validly claim the prerogatives of elderhood and social power was a subject of dispute and ambiguity. The logic of bridewealth control, for example, continued to grant a father the old basis for holding onto his dependent's labor by postponing his marriage, but this ended up being to the benefit of the government and the chief who requisitioned it for their own purposes. Not only fathers, but chiefs and ultimately the French government, were concerned to keep bridewealth beyond the reach of the ordinary man because otherwise the system of labor control at all levels could begin to unravel.[5]

None of these systems of recruitment by the chiefs provided exactly the labor force to match a particular agricultural plan, either in size, or sexual composition, or timing of mobilization. And once recruited, the group still had to be organized. The individual cases illustrate various different ways in which farming and the labor force were brought into relationship by the small group of chiefs who governed the Beti in the inter-war years.

Examples of Large-scale Farms

1. Ngoa Evina, Chef Superieur of the Mvele (West), a Traditional Polygynist[6]

Ngoa Evina was appointed as Superior Chief some time during the inter-war years and died in 1954. He was the last of the *grands polygames*, with 154 wives at the time he died. The village where he lived is still clearly marked by his presence. The modern house in concrete, with his tomb in front, stands at the center of the settlement, his many sons are the current elders of the community, and about twenty-five of his widows still live there. There are several (three, it is said) residents of mixed parentage, the offspring of touring French administrators who accepted sexual access to a chief's wife as a traditional mode of Beti hospitality to an honored guest. Ngoa Evina did not live in the ceremonial house, preferring a small, traditional hut, with a palm-frond roof, set up on a little rise from which he could survey his village.

It requires some inference to gain an impression of Ngoa Evina himself and his style of improvisation on Beti principles of organization. My sense is that he used the power assigned to him to administer his population, but not to galvanize entrepreneurial

[5]Throughout the interwar years, except possibly for the brief economic boom in the late 1920s, bridewealth rates were very high in relation to after tax income. The administration advocated a rate of 400 francs at a time when the wage rate for porters and others in public works was 0.50 francs per day (A.R. 1926:10), and head tax was 20 francs (A.R. 1927:38).

[6]This sketch is based entirely on interviews in Bikoe, including a group session with Ngoa Evina's surviving widows, 12 June 1979.

activity, either by himself or others. The patterns of farming and the internal structure of his "household" suggest delegation, flexibility and an adjustment of production to a predominantly female labor force.

To run such a large enterprise, Ngoa Evina appears to have instituted new positions of authority amongst his wives and separated some of the functions formerly held by the *mkpəg*. He had more than one, and up to three, wives, known as *mininga edin* (from *a din*: to love), who were responsible for his personal needs and his food. In addition, there were two women known as *nkukuma mininga*, chosen by the chief and the wives together, whose job was to administer the work, store the surpluses of groundnuts, melon-seeds and sesame, and train the junior wives in their charge. The term *nkukuma mininga*, literally a female chief, is one which I never came across anywhere else, and I wonder whether it is an innovation particular to this area.[7] Each female chief had a house at the head of one of the long rows of wives' houses. She was responsible for organizing work and for knowing the identity of all her charges, particularly the children since some were junior wives and others daughters. In addition, each had a speciality: one was *enyanga angula*, in charge of food, and the other *essama abanga*, in charge of settling conflicts. Ngoa Evina's widows stressed that while he chose the candidates for these positions himself, on the basis of their reputation for hard work, discretion, fidelity and managerial ability, they also had to have the confidence of the other women.

The farms confirm the impression that there was some separation of spheres of control between Ngoa Evina and his wives. The most important farms were all in the large tracts of savanna which his predecessors had used as hunting grounds as well as farms. The fact that, as people emphasized, Ngoa Evina did not have his wives working in the forest, implies that he elaborated the sector already associated with female labor, rather than trying to develop forest cultivation as well. Women were able to do most of the agricultural labor themselves because clearing new fields did not involve felling trees. The important prestige crop of the forest field, melon-seed, was brought into the savanna field by the use of the savanna variety, *omgbas*. Yams, also, were grown in the women's field instead of the pure stands associated with male labor. As a cash crop, Ngoa Evina developed sesame (*nyata*), another savanna crop. The field types and crop varieties therefore suggest a high degree of feminization, a production plan adjusted to a female work force and the traditional division of labor.

These large fields were divided up into sections; a major tract was devoted to Ngoa Evina's own needs, and smaller sections were allotted to the wives to work individually to feed their own children. All the harvest from his tract went into his own storehouse, but each wife had her own product to dispose of, from her own plot. Not all work was therefore collective. Collective labor on the chief's field was announced on the drum (*nkul*), organized into groups under the female chiefs, and accompanied to the field by musicians in a manner reminiscent of men's labor groups (*ekaas*) from the past.

[7]This term implies "female chief"; in converse order, *mininga nkukuma*, the term means the wife of the chief.

Ngoa Evina therefore seems to have implemented a form of domestic production which corresponded closely to a fairly liberal traditional pattern, even though it was at least three times larger. The difference of scale was reflected mainly in the greater number and variety of managerial positions amongst the wives and the unambiguously female orientation of the farming system. His increased power was reflected in the clear distinction between his and their product; there was no area of discretion over shares in the chief's own plot.

By comparison the enterprise of the most idiosyncratic of the *grands polygames*, Zogo Fouda Ngono, would seem positively industrial in its organization.

2. Zogo Fouda Ngono, Chef Superieur of the Manguissa, Polygynist and Innovator[8]

The northern Beti, on the borders of intermittent warfare and slave-raiding, had higher polygyny rates and tighter control over female activity from the pre-colonial period. Zogo Fouda elaborated that tradition and took it in totally new directions. The census of 1932 enumerated 203 wives (Kuczynski 1939:160); when he died in 1939 he had 583 wives (Archives at Saa). Using these women as a labor force he developed what is probably the most complex indigenous agricultural enterprise which the Beti area has ever seen. On the occasion of the first agricultural fair in 1928 he was highly praised: "Zogo Fouda, Chef Superieur of the Manguissas, whose efforts in the agricultural domain have been noted many times, again demonstrated his remarkable qualities by the variety of local and European goods which he showed" (Eze 1969:259). Of course, the basis on which such a vast and eccentric expansion was possible was the force of the colonial government. In spite of a few mild observations that he was "a little old-fashioned" (Eze 1969:144), the administration kept him in power in the face of stiff opposition. Early on, the French apparently decided that they could aim only "to limit" the "brutality" and "exactions" of the Manguissa chiefs (1924 quoted in Eze 1969:310), and therefore backed Zogo Fouda in spite of the fact that "his influence would probably be disputed if we did not enforce respect each time that the village chiefs try to place it in question" (Eze 1969:128).

Zogo Fouda recruited his labor force through an intensification of the politics of marriage. He created such a level of fear and disorder that the practice whereby families offered a daughter in return for protection lost much of its persuasive ideological gloss. Almost every family had a daughter in his village in Saa and people were naming baby girls "Nga Zogo": Zogo's wife. Such proliferation meant that it amounted almost to a tax, rather than a personalistic contract. On tour in the villages, he is said to have picked out local girls to join his other wives and to have solved disputes about women by essentially confiscating the source of the problem. This must have cut deeply into the smaller-scale power of local polygynous headmen, men who would have been important in their own

[8]This reconstruction is based on interviews with men in Saa, Obala, and Nkolo, with two of Zogo Fouda's surviving widows (29 March 1977; 5 April 1977; 19-22 June 1979). The archival records are more extensive for him than for many of the other chiefs.

right. On this scale the system becomes undiscriminating and therefore loses the particularism which lies at the basis of patron-client relations. Caught between general support for the ideas embodied in polygyny and paternalistic clientship, and the travesty which Zogo Fouda was making of it, people appealed to the administration to: restore a sister detained for two years in Fouda's village, prevent the cheating on taxes perpetrated by his literate clerks on a illiterate population, do anything possible about the sorcery he was said to be practicing with the help of Muslim mallams and so on (Archives at Saa). Unlike Ngoa Evina, he went beyond the framework of tradition, not only in the scale of operations, but in their internal organization as well.

People who remember this era remark first of all on the radical segregation which Fouda imposed on his wives. They were tattooed on the cheek and/or the forearm with his name, kept within a guarded enclosure, allowed out in groups of not less than three, and strictly forbidden sexual, or even tactile, relations with men. In a society in which sexuality and fertility are so important, it is a tribute to the level of fear he maintained that the birthrate among his wives was so low; he left only 69 minor children when he died, and approximately the same number of adult children (CNA, Archives at Saa).

Other radical departures were instituted. Instead of allowing each woman her own plot, Zogo Fouda specialized his labor force into units, and therefore had an organizational basis for a total monopoly over the product. Units of approximately twenty women were assigned a task for the day, which, if it involved field work, lasted long into the afternoon. Other units were assigned to cooking for the whole village, carrying out various household tasks, processing, porterage and so on. All of the agricultural work was done by the wives, except for the clearing of new forest fields, and in fact, only his wives were allowed into the cash crop plantations at harvest time for fear of theft or sorcery. Nothing was left to the discretionary disposal of the wives; at his death one of the older women is said to have "stolen" a substantial sum of money before the division of the property in order to further her son's education which had been entirely out of her control up to that point. The specialization of female labor lifted the entire question of distribution of the product out of the context of culturally sanctioned guidelines. By intensifying his control in this way, Zogo Fouda turned what was, in institutional terms, family production, into a mode of appropriation which was clearly servitude.

At the same time as innovating in the organization of work, Zogo Fouda appears to have pushed against the limits of the sexual division of labor. Like Ngoa Evina, he vastly expanded the traditional savanna rotation; more than three-fourths of the baskets of harvested crops which he left at his death were groundnuts (Archives at Saa). But he also used female labor on cash crops, especially for the harvest because of his fear of theft. Women even cut the palm bunches, although probably not by climbing the trees. He clearly took an experimental approach to the use of an all-female labor force.

Under this system Fouda produced a positive cornucopeia of agricultural goods. When he died the property was inventoried by a representative of the administration and by a neighboring chief,

Simon Etaba. It included: nine cocoa farms (about 45,000 trees), almost 10,000 coffee trees, 15,000 palms plus a new plantation of raphia palm, rubber and fruit trees, eleven storehouses containing almost 400 "baskets"[9] of groundnuts, melon-seeds, sesame and rice, 800 small animals, chickens, European vegetable gardens employing four full-time gardners, oil-processing facilities, a relative fortune of 38,000 francs, and debts owed him amounting to 50,000 francs. He had kept the mission at Saa in free food and the Yaoundé administration in free groundnut oil. Each week he had sent 20 or 30, and up to a hundred porters to Yaoundé with food for the urban market.

While preserving marriage as the means for initial recruitment, and as the defining ideology for his wives' subordination, Zogo Fouda abandoned the traditional guidelines of marriage as a framework for the organization of work. Whether he achieved higher productivity, in the sense of increased returns to labor, is a moot point, but there is no doubt that production was high in a wide diversity of products, and that the chieftaincy at Saa could provide almost anything to the administration at a moment's notice.

3. The Farms of Monogamous Chiefs

In the agricultural stakes, Zogo Fouda was a very hard act to compete with for monogamous chiefs. Christianity made the institutions of marriage inaccessible as a means to large-scale labor control. Indeed, conversion was an extremely complex operation for a man of any importance, and above all for a chief. Zogo Fouda conveniently converted on his deathbed. Ngoa Evina never converted. Tsanga Manga, superior chief of the Western Eton, a polygynist with 70 wives, converted at a time of peak economic expansion in the 1920s, and went through a period of several years when his entire political and economic enterprise was more or less moribund as a result. The use of other mechanisms cannot possibly have been as "efficient" as polygyny, with its established hierarchies, division of labor, and designated ways of carrying out the entire sequence of tasks from clearing to storage and porterage. It is not incidental that Zogo Fouda was the most innovative and successful of farmers, nor that his main rival for that honor, Max Abe Fouda, who was a Christian, is on record and in people's memories as the most brutal of overseers.

Max Abe Fouda was dismissed from his chieftaincy in 1934 for extreme disciplinary measures taken against his workers, several of whom are said by present informants to have died from the beatings administered. In the 1920s he was one of the favorites of the administration, able to produce goods, workers and personal wealth with

[9]The storage baskets for groundnuts and melon-seed (*mengunda*; sing.: *angunda*) can be very large. They are closed, pear-shaped, with a door in the side to take out the seed. If they are never intended to be moved, they can be up to a meter in height. The size used for sales is about one meter high by 30cm square at the base.

remarkable speed and efficiency.[10] In 1934 he is reported to have owned 3,600 coffee trees, and a large cocoa farm producing 12 to 15 tons a year by this time, and expected to reach 20 tons when all the trees were bearing (ANSOM carton 151, dossier 5). In addition, he produced large quantities of palm kernels.

There is a gap here in my knowledge of exactly how the farming was organized. When people talked of the large farms of monogamous chiefs, the implication was that the labor force was primarily male, composed, for example, of men escaping from forced labor. The crops most often mentioned were either various export crops, as in the example above, or included new food crops such as Irish potatoes, rice, and Western vegetables. One informant noted that the sexual division of labor was observed, that men were not expected to hoe women's fields. It would be logical to infer that the chiefs located traditional food farms in the villages where there was easy access to female labor, and worked export crop farms with recruited labor; but I do not know this for sure and it would require further work in other chieftaincies to illuminate this. Certainly the government-enforced cultivation of rice was set up in the villages, rather than large farms, and drew on both male and female labor. But the dilemma is important: as long as the sexual divison of labor in agriculture was preserved, large supplies of complementary male and female labor could only be achieved through the institutional framework of traditional marriage taken as a whole, including co-resident clientship, or through a peasant system of locating the farm amongst the people and requiring labor service of both sexes on it. Otherwise, an agricultural entrepreneur got a labor force in which one sex predominated. In this case, the cultivation system was selectively applied to make maximum use of what one had. A final example of such a system is the mission farms.

4. The Missions

During the inter-war period large numbers of Beti people converted to Catholicism in a process as fraught with conflict as the development of export crop agriculture. The implication for marriage was its major point of attraction, to women, and its greatest threat, to the older men. As a sanctuary, the mission took in and housed people who wanted protection in return for allegiance. It was politically impossible for the mission to take in men escaping from forced labor; they were in enough conflict with the administration without that. Most of its fugitives were therefore women escaping from unacceptable marriages.

A woman living at the mission defined herself in quasi-kinship terms as *ngɔn fada:* daughter of the priest (Vincent 1976:66). She lived with a whole group of others in the same situation in an

[10]Examples of the chiefs' work are given in Guyer 1978; 1981. During 1925, Max Abe Fouda provided a large contingent of men to cut the trace for the M'Balmayo-Otele railway extension, committed himself to provide 250 workers for road construction, provided fifty tons of fresh food for workers' rations, sent fifteen loads of an experimental potato crop to Yaoundé and cultivated his thirty hectare cocoa plantation (CNA APA 11828/H). In 1933 he had a coffee harvest of almost two tons, and in one trimester of 1934 sold 2,400 kg. of palm oil and 3,400 kg. of kernels.

institution known as *sixa,* from the pidgin for sister.[11] From here she could be married, almost as if she were marrying from her father's house. Since she was, in theory, training for Christian marriage, she generally left whenever the mission decided it was time. She often chose her husband, but the following statement suggests that the mission could do its own matchmaking: "the young men who wanted to get married went to the priest or the head of the sixa and had all the unmarried girls lined up; they had only to make their choice" (Vincent 1976:48).

While they lived at the *sixa,* for periods up to two years and possibly more, the women were subject to strict discipline. Work was organized by group, under a leader, as it was among the *grands polygames.* Like the polygamous wives, the *sixa* women spent the vast proportion of their time in food cultivation. Possibly they worked even harder, since several of Vincent's informants mention the unfamiliarity of working in the fields in the afternoon as well as the morning. Like the polygamous wives, they grew predominantly female crops: "The women worked hard on the farms of the mission: cocoyams, groundnuts, yams, manioc.... Even the school for the girls was agricultural work. We shelled coffee beans; we shelled groundnuts and melon-seeds" (Vincent 1976:56). Out of this list of products, only melon-seed and coffee imply male labor for clearing the fields. The entire product belonged to the mission where it formed the basis for subsistence. In many ways, the productive organization of the sixa resembled a polygynous village. The ideology of paternalism was substituted for the ideology of marital relations.

These, then, were the large-scale productive enterprises of the pre-World War II period. Many of them, including the most successful, were justified by the idiom of marriage and paternalism, but each with a critical shift in organizational principles and/or cultivation practice to accomodate Christianity, and the primary rights of the state. Such a social conjuring trick could only be achieved in an atmosphere of endemic conflict, since people could see that the source of general disorder and personal safety were one and the same. At the base were the small units of village life, whose members were locked in battle with outsiders and with each other to hold onto resources, find protection, retain prestige and keep the subsistence enterprise afloat.

How, then, was production and family life organized at the local level, in the units which provided labor, goods, taxes, porterage, wives for the chiefs and so on? First of all, there seems no doubt that the sex ratio in the rural areas altered to give a greater predominance of women. Kuscynski's data for the Circumscription of Yaoundé in 1931 suggests a ratio of 125 women between the ages of 14 and 59 to 100 men in the same age bracket (Kuscynski 1939:97). Large numbers of men fled to other areas of the country, and those who remained were heavily requisitioned. About one-third of the resident adult men were not married, 40 percent were monogamous, and the remaining 30 percent averaged over three wives each (Kuscynski 1939:160).

[11]The sixa is the subject of the famous novel by Mongo Beti, *The Poor Christ of Bomba.*

Calculations of family income from the investigations of tax rates during the Depression, were based on the assumption of a man and two wives (APA 10904/B). According to Kuscynski's figures, only 30 percent of adult men would have fallen into this category of polygynists. For the rest, one report notes that it was almost impossible for a monogamous family to produce enough to pay their taxes (APA 10904/B). The report on the central Beti area assumes not only two wives, but two children as well, and it is clear from the goods accounted (groundnuts, maize, melon-seeds, palm kernels, and a small amount of cacao) that female and child labor was critical. Palm kernels were the most important source of cash until after 1945. Women and children extracted the kernels by cracking them, one by one, between two stones. For several decades cracking palm nuts was a regular activity of children; men now in their 40s remember paying their school fees to the missions in kind, in palm kernels. The authority which men legitimately held over women and children's labor was therefore intensified within the restricted family by the enormous increase in the workload required to make a living.[12]

In the depths of the Depression many small producers turned to cocoa, which offered considerably higher returns than palm kernels (Henn 1978:114). Some chiefs, Zogo Fouda Ngono for example, tried to retard this development but men travelled to other regions to get the seeds. Between 1932 and 1935 there was a burst of cocoa planting, with an increasing proportion grown on small farms (Assoumou 1977). In the long run, much of this early small-holder cocoa was badly planted and had to be replaced, but the people near the bottom of the colonial social hierarchy had seen its advantages. Taken together, they constituted an extremely powerful solution, not only to poverty but to the problem of a viable economic base for the monogamous, tax-paying Christian family. As long as the price remained high, cocoa was agriculturally, organizationally, and structurally precisely what some Beti called it, "minkoe-miyen-ngana": a refuge for the unfortunate (Tsala 1956:268). When the legal and administrative supports to the chiefs were finally taken away in 1946, and cocoa prices started to climb, there was a new surge of entrepreneurial activity, in farming and in marriage.

It is worth commenting here, before outlining the family organization of the cocoa expansion, that I doubt very much that Beti women saw this development in a negative light. The structure which developed over the decades during which cocoa dominated family relations is one thing, and the incentives to go into it, another. After the rigid control over women during the interwar period, subsequent political changes undermining chieftaincy, widow inheritance and child betrothal, opened up new possibilities of negotiating relationships. After palm kernel extraction, the development of a productive cash crop which employed male labor offered a new labor and income situation.

Women came into the new marriage system with the groundnut rotation still intact. There is no evidence at all that the division of labor and the field system had been radically altered during this

[12]Richards (1983) has made the interesting suggestion that the increased processing and other off-farm work of women was more proletarianization than gentrification. Which of these terms is more appropriate depends on the relations involved, the kind of control, and the distribution of the income. During the Depression, there was very little gain to anyone except the State.

period. Only Zogo Fouda had dared to reorganize work in a new way. Enormous surpluses had been produced and extracted, but much of it through labor taxes of various sorts. The old field system had survived alongside this. The greatest changes appear to have been the beginning of a decline in *esep* and in yam cultivation, associated with the lack of male labor. This process possibly began as early as the German period. Rudin reports that the high levels of labor recruitment to porterage stressed the traditional agriculture system (1938:322). The flight of men to other parts of the country during the 1920s was a cause of bitter complaint by the women to touring administrators (CNA APA 11954) and a recommendation was made to avoid requisitioning labor during the clearing season. Women may have already begun a technical adjustment to reduced male labor input into the food provision system, before cocoa cultivation restructured the farming calendar. Certainly the enforced sedentization of the 1920s and 1930s provided the ecological context in which *esep* cultivation might go into relative decline.

While farm work may have preserved its old contours, the appropriation and distribution system had not. People had been impoverished. The level of surplus in local villages must surely have fallen, the goat herds were diminished and items of traditional wealth, such as iron-rod currency, went out of circulation. Poverty, chiefs' exactions and Christian conversion of their children had all undermined the authority of the ordinary family "elder." Both he and the colonial chief were in decline as autocratic authorities in local production and distribution systems. Although World War II saw a brief revival of administrative control and forced labor, accompanied by stagnant markets, the post-War abolition of the *indigênat* pulled the lynchpin out of this kind of direct extraction. Restrictions on mobility were lifted and markets opened up. A somewhat wider range of possibilities was presented to people, in production and in marriage. The question of shares in a rising rural income was a more open one, at all levels, than it had been twenty-five years earlier.

Small-holder Cocoa-farming Families

Unlike many other West African cocoa-producers, the Beti did not migrate in search of cocoa land when restrictions on mobility were lifted. It is rather striking that, for a people whose pre-colonial social structure was predicated on shifting residence, on the foundation of new villages by descent segments and accumulating headman, Beti settlements have been remarkably sedentary since their forced regroupment in the early colonial period. When controls were lifted, the agricultural population essentially stayed where it was, neither looking backward towards a regroupment of pre-colonial clans and communities which were now spread out, interspersed and often living on one another's land, nor looking forward towards a totally new pattern based on commercial prospects. If young people left, it was to towns and not to other rural areas in search of land, and the markedly uneven population distribution of the colonial period has been more or less preserved up to the present.

A conjunction of several circumstances explains this new attachment to the land. First, the administrative structures, including village headmen, courts, schools, and missions were all established,

so that moving a whole settlement, as people did in the past, was politically and materially impractical. Since all the land had been staked out, if not as farms then at least as jurisdictional regions, mobility of residence implied seeking permission to settle and therefore taking an implicitly subordinate position. Only as individuals and under pressure had the Beti ever resettled under this kind of arrangement.

The other factor was the importance of tree crops as a basis for the cash economy. Many men had already planted cocoa by the end of the 1930s, and although much of it had to be replanted, some investment had already been made, often on land in a prime location for ease of marketing. For those who had not yet planted, their own vicinity was as suitable for cocoa development as anywhere else.

In addition, it seems that the young and those of low status could, at this moment, emancipate themselves within the context of their home village. Many of the present older generation describe developing their own cocoa farms in their youth, a fact which they quote in criticism of the present younger generation's alleged lack of enterprise. The situation in the present is, of course, different in that control of land is more formalized than it was then, suitable uncultivated land is often far from the transport routes, and the cocoa price was in steady decline from the mid-1950s until the late 1970s. All this will be elaborated later. Suffice it here to suggest that, under the conditions of post-war growth, it seems that young men and people of slave origin were able to establish their own farms. People not of the local *mvog*, that is, people descended from slaves or other dependents, not generally poorer than the descendants of their former masters. Mainly on ritual occasions, such as funerals, or in access to political-symbolic positions, are they still treated as subordinates.

It takes some reading between the lines of survey works done at this time to reconstruct the processes involved, but nothing supports the interpretation that "elders" dominated the development of cocoa cultivation in the 1940s and 1950s as the chiefs and "notables" had done in the 1920s and 1930s. The power of the chiefs and their retainers had been definitively destroyed by changes in administrative structures and the abolition of the *indigénat*. As for the headmen and elders at the village level, they must have acquiesced in the assignment of more resources to younger men because both marriage and farming began to be more evenly distributed, and neither could be engaged in without a father's permission.

To digress briefly, it is worth noting that the social organization of Beti cocoa farming is individual, small-scale and non-migrant, unlike many of the other cocoa producers of West Africa (Dupire 1960 ; Hill 1963; Berry 1975). This has important implications for the debt structures created during a period of rapid expansion. The potential organizational bases for collective mobilization had been badly undermined by the acrimony of the interwar years. By consolidating individual ventures, people were escaping from the interdependencies implied in group organization. Secondly, the relative recency and forced nature of village settlement in the Yaoundé area meant that there was no solid politico-legal framework for temporary migration; there were no clear rights of settlement away from home, no rights of return, no system for dividing responsibility amongst siblings so that one preserved the land while the

other travelled, and no definable land code, either customary or legal. Apart from militating against migration, this also meant that little endebtedness was incurred fighting land cases in court, unlike the situation in other parts of the cocoa belt. The other reason for apparently low levels of debt was that men were able to "invest" in cocoa, develop a small cocoa farm, without the problem of supplementary labor for the early stages of crop-tending, and without ensuring support until the first harvest, because their wives could fulfil at least a substantial part of the need for labor and for food. The ability to invest therefore depended more on marriage than it did on mobilizing resources through social or financial debts.

Marriage was the crucial step to emancipation. It would be difficult to exaggerate the passion of public discussion about marriage at this time, particularly about bridewealth levels. Among those advocating a radical rejection of the old patterns were Beti men writers and scholars. The plight of women was the subject of a remarkable novel written about the author's paternal aunt, a woman who had been inherited several times subject to the political maneuverings of local notables (Owono 1959). One of the first important sociological and historical analyses of bridewealth levels was done by Owono Nkoudou at this time (1953). The central striking fact was that bridewealth seemed to be inflating extremely rapidly. In retrospect, and in relation to rapid inflation in all other prices, it seems to me this has been misleading. Binet's budget study done in 1954 certainly confirmed the odd extraordinary amount, but the mean was not as high relative to mean income as it had clearly been in the interwar years. The 400-600 franc price which the chiefs attempted to implement was consistently above the realizable income of the smaller productive units; I have argued that it was two to three times the amount such a unit could possibly have retained in after-tax income (Guyer 1983a). Binet's figures, by contrast, place bridewealth at almost exactly the same level as annual household cash income, and Binet himself concludes that, in spite of the enormous controversy over the subject between the parties to transactions and among observers and reformers, "bridewealth does not have the importance in local economic life that people try to give it" (1956:85). I would argue that the new competitive, reconstructive climate in economic, social and legal structures provoked all the noise of renegotiation, but ultimately resulted in a decline in bridewealth levels, not absolutely, but in relation to rapidly rising incomes. Concomitantly there were fundamental changes in patterns of marriage and in domestic organization.

The patterns which emerge from Binet's budget study, done in 1954 at the peak of the post-war cocoa boom, and Marticou's farm survey done in 1959, show these new trends. Polygyny had declined, especially in the missionized populations. Elsewhere the distribution had changed, less perhaps in simple frequency than in the age structure and in the number of wives per polygynously married man. Binet gives data on marital status by age of the husband, for an area where polygyny was still quite important. The differences between cohorts are striking, but hardly support the idea that elders still monopolized rights in women. The category of men over 55 in 1954, that is, men who were young adults at the time of forced labor, had high proportions who were both unmarried and polygynously

married (31 percent and 54 percent respectively for the age group between 60 and 65 years old). Unfortunately one cannot tell whether the "unmarried" were constituted by a great wave of "never-married," of "nobodies," who had been the exploited labor of the inter-war years and never managed to recover, or whether this could be an unusually high number of widowers, or yet whether the young wives of older men simply deserted when the constraints were lifted. Whatever the underlying reasons, the pattern suggests a sharply differentiated population, and differs markedly from the marital status of the next cohort, the men who came to adulthood during and since economic recovery and political liberalization. In this age group, between 30 and 45 in 1954, there were very few men who were unmarried (6 to 11 percent), about two-thirds were monogamously married and a relatively high one-fourth were polygynous. Under 30, a high proportion of men were still unmarried (25 percent between 25 and 30), but even in this age group, 15 percent were polygynously married (Binet 1956:32). Again, we have no way of knowing certain crucial facts, such as the proportions of married women accounted for by inherited widows. Although widow inheritance was formally against the law by this time,[13] obviously the reporting of such relationships could be inconsistent, as it remains to the present. But it seems doubtful that it was a very important proportion of marriages by the mid-1950s.

In summary, the scale of polygynous marriage had almost certainly fallen, so that the category of men with an average of three or more wives - one-third in the 1930s - was undoubtedly smaller in the 1950s. While the proportion of unmarried men is similar in the two periods, the distribution of wives amongst those married was more even and included some young polygynists. The striking differences in marriage patterns between cohorts of men is too discrepant to interpret in terms of a simple developmental cycle. It seems rather that marriage patterns were in the process of change.

For women, the data are poorer, but the implication of the figures on men is that a larger proportion of adult women were unmarried at any one time. This fits with the sense that the marriage age was rising to well above puberty, and with the gradual decline in widow inheritance.

In the light of profiles such as these, one has to be very careful applying general models of the relationship between the generations in agricultural societies. A father's authority over his children was altered by implemented changes in marriage law, and also by their new possibilities for leaving the village altogether. A father's simple self-interest might have been better served in other ways than through postponing a son's marriage. Under these particular conditions of rising prices and expanding production, the interests of most fathers and their sons could well have coincided. If an older man wanted to hold onto some, at least, of his son's labor input, then all common sense encouraged him to find him a wife. A man old enough to have a marriageable son was unlikely to

[13]Until 1945, the law required that an inherited widow live in the village of her inheritor, unless the bridewealth had been repaid. In 1945, a widow was given right of refusal, which, if she exercised it, rendered void all claims on her (Journal Officiel du Cameroun 13.11.45).

find a young wife for himself by this time because the power of the law no longer stood behind men's rights to marry women against their will. Since the work of a wife was far more reliable than the work of a daughter, and played a crucial role as a basis for land claims, it was better to acquire a daughter-in-law and establish one's son as an independent farmer within the village, where both would be available to help on a seasonal basis, than to retain direct control and eventually drive him away to employment elsewhere. Likewise, a son had every interest in helping to set up his father's farm, since it would come to him in inheritance.

Binet appears to have had reservations about the veracity of some of the statements men made about the relationship between young men and their fathers; at one point he reports that "Non-occupied land is plentiful, and if one accepts their word, the heads of families could not wish for better than to encourage the young to work for the future by giving them land" (1956:62), while later claiming that the willingness of the old to grant land to the young was a major problem (1956:152). The data does not yet support his doubts. For example, the age distribution of those reporting bride-wealth transactions is very similar for givers and receivers, with 55 percent of givers, and 57.1 percent of the receivers in the age bracket 35-50. Even men between 20 and 25 were receiving bridewealth in almost the same proportions as they were paying it out (1956:84). Indeed, Binet comments that fathers had come to terms with this: "in view of the individualism of the young, their fathers prefer to give them directly the sum which is due them," that is, to allow their sons to receive the bridewealth for their sisters (1956:84), a practice which could be culturally validated by the very old system of matched siblings (*atud*) and "sister exchange."[14]

The expectation of conflict makes more sense in the situation as it developed after 1956, when the most convenient land had already been taken and when cocoa prices went into steady decline. By that time, the barriers to marriage for a young man consisted much less in the refusal of a rich father to countenance his independence, than in the refusal of prospective fathers-in-law to part with their daughters except at a bridewealth rate which had become barely feasible to pay out of reduced cocoa income.

Paternal control still existed in the early 1950s, since a man still depended on his father for bridewealth and farm land, but it no longer resulted in the formation of large productive units made up of polygynously married wives and unmarried male dependents. When Marticou studied the structure of farm units in 1959, 20 percent of his sample consisted of unmarried men and 61 percent were monogamously married. The average number of people per "exploitation" was 4.5, or 2.7 "actifs" (Marticou 1962:7). Less than 3 percent had seven or more "actifs."

Since there was no labor for hire outside the familial framework, the virtual elimination of politically-based differentiation in marriage is directly reflected in the relative lack of differentiation in farm size and organization. According to Marticou, the age of the planter in the Departement du Nyong et Sanaga had no effect on farm size or the mix of cocoa and food plots; for the

[14]The institution of *atud* is the pairing of a particular sister with a brother, such that her marriage provides him with the means to marry (Laburthe-Tolra 1981:216).

average farm of 2.27 ha., 1.64 ha. (72 percent) of it was in cocoa, and 0.63 (28 percent) in food, with very minor variations across age categories (1962:18,11).

While age made no difference to farm size, there was a relationship between the number of wives and farm acreage (1962:12). This is perfectly predictable in a system where each woman has her own food fields. What is important is that beyond two wives there appear, from the limited insights one can gain from farm size alone, to be no returns to scale. A man with one wife had a farm which was 15 percent larger than the average farm of one unmarried man and one unmarried woman, taken together (figures for Nyong et Sanaga). By two wives, the area per worker was back down to the unmarried level, and kept on declining. The pattern suggests that after two wives, additions were entirely arithmetical, the cocoa farm remaining the same size, with each additional wife cultivating her own food farms which were approximately the same area as any other woman's fields. If there were advantages to larger scale polygyny, they were not in production, but in the different possibilities for pooling the product.

One wife was therefore important to successful cocoa farming, but more than this was less crucial. This does not mean, however, that women's contribution to the cocoa economy can be described entirely in terms of a wife's work on her husband's farm, because the group of related neighbors and kin, and their wives, constituted a collective resource which men drew on during the cocoa harvest. That is, although the restricted household is so starkly depicted in these reports for the 1950s, it still depended on a larger group for certain resources. The mobilization of labor, both within the restricted family and in the larger kin group, still followed the patterns of the division of labor which were based on marriage. Men and women worked with different tools, tended to specialize in different crops and field types, and distributed the product in accordance with a concept of the different economic spheres for a man and his wife.

The association of cocoa with male labor was highly consonant with Beti ideas about both land occupation and agricultural practice. Insofar as land was "owned" at all in the pre-colonial system, primary rights were held by whoever opened the first cycle of cultivation, that is, the man who cleared the forest for the first *esep* field. On the same principle, trees were owned by whoever planted them. These rights were inherited by sons, each group of siblings holding primary claims to at least that portion of their father's land which had been worked as a groundndut field by their mother. In the past, many of these claims were probably never acted upon since villages were moving, but in the sedentary village economy of the cocoa era, patrilineal inheritance became the central principle for establishing land rights. The regrouped villages of the past generation were now framed on patrilineal descent. Every man had a right to land, and only men had the right to plant anything permanent. A woman's land rights remained those of a married-in wife, as will be elaborated later. Women had no automatic claim to cocoa trees.

The cultivation of cocoa also fit into Beti ideas about the division of labor like a hand into a glove. It was grown in field types which had always been associated with male labor in the past,

esep (*ekpak*), and *falag bikon*, the plantain plot behind the village. Most of the land classifiable as *falag*, behind the village, was probably already in cocoa by the 1950s, so the new planting was integrated with the basic food rotations. A man cleared an *esep* field and planted cocoa seedlings under the shade of the cocoyams. His wife then worked the field as if it were a food plot, weeding, hoeing and tending the cocoa trees as she went. By the time the plot would normally have been returned to fallow, the cocoa was fairly tall and simply required clearing out from undergrowth with a machete several times a year. In the initial three years of cultivation, cocoa and food crops were entirely complementary.

In terms of labor organization, establishing a young cocoa farm was almost identical to melon-seed cultivation, in technique, in the tasks assigned to the sexes, and in the ownership of the plot. The timing of the harvest is very similar, in October and November, the organization of mixed work parties to break the cabosses and extract the beans bears resemsblance to the melon-seed harvest, and, like melon-seed, cocoa is a constituent of male wealth. It could also be grown, if necessary, by a man working alone, as could an *esep* field. Men still make this association; when asked whether he still made an *esep* (*ekpak*) field, an Eton farmer replied "our cocoa plots are our *bikpak*," a comment which is true in the literal sense and also in the sense that cocoa became the male side of the productive economy.

The substitution of cocoa for *esep* and other male crops can be seen from Marticou's study in 1959. The food crops which had benefitted from male labor input were cultivated very little by 1959, and the entire pattern of cultivation appears to be dominated by the predominently female groundnut field. Melon-seed was grown in only 8 percent of fields, at low crop densities (1-4 stand per 100 square meters), and yams were planted in 28 percent of fields, again at the same low density. Cassava, the main staple of the groundnut rotation, was present in 80 percent of fields, at 10-14 stands per 100 square meters, and 39 percent of fields contained groundnuts (Marticou 1962: 38-39). The colonial arable crops - rice, potatoes, sesame - more or less disappeared in all but a few places where new government institutions supported production [15]

These patterns suggest a quite radical polarization of male and female labor, once the cocoa was established. The joint phases or crops of the old food system, such as yams or the melon-seed cycle in *esep*, were being apparently greatly reduced. After the cocoa was established, food crops could no longer be grown on that land, and the two fields ceased to be jointly worked. At a certain point, men stopped developing new cocoa plots because of bottlenecks in maintenance and harvesting. After this, cocoa and food were no longer a single complementary field system, but two separate cropping and labor cycles. The decline of *esep* did not provoke the development of new intercropping or rotation patterns because the groundnut plot already existed as an institutionalized way of working short fallow land, without much male labor input, while still supplying the diet without resort to the market.

[15]During the 1940s and 1950s rice was an important cash crop in the north-eastern Beti area, around Nanga Eboko. It was run by the Provident Society (see Guyer 1980c).

Of course, this shortened cycle had to be intensified to make up the losses. In many areas, women had only grown groundnuts in the first, less heavy, rainy season (*asil*), when it yields better, whereas at present a new groundnut field is planted in both rainy seasons. Field sizes and crop densities could also be increased, as could the cultivation of cassava on fallow land.

In all probability the withdrawal of male labor during the early colonial period had prepared the way for this pattern of recycling of groundnut-fallow and increased dependence on the groundnut field. With cocoa, new factors were added to a powerful logic favoring the short fallow of the groundnut field, including men's concentration on cocoa, the permanent alienation of land for cocoa, and sedentary villages with growing populations.[16]

The basic outline of the system already existed, but there is some evidence that the adjustment met with difficulties. Not only did the variety in the diet decline, due to declines in hunting, gathering, and the male field system, but it appears that it became actually deficient in some places. Masseyeff et al. report a diet reaching only 74 percent of standard in calories and 63 percent in protein, in a cocoa-producing region, at the time of peak cocoa prices in 1954 (1958:52). Tissandier's later study in a savanna region north and east of Yaoundé, suggests that people were short of food for seven months of the year (1969:59). In terms of possible causes of the situation, Masseyeff suggests that women were simply overburdened, while Tissandier is more inclined to blame the extension of market sales of food crops.

In light of studies done in the 1960s and more recently, at a time when food crop sales were certainly higher and the real value of cash income lower, the above conclusions demand contextualization. By 1964 a major survey found calorie intake to be 100 percent of standards of adequacy, protein to be at 86 percent adequacy, (SEDES 1964/5:30), and the national nutrition survey of 1978 found relatively low levels of undernutrition in this area (R.U.C. 1978). Was the shortage structural, and if so, by what means, or was it transitional? The decline in the diet to below basic needs when cash income was rising, and its subsequent recovery as cocoa incomes fell, demands to be understood in relation to the division of economic spheres.

The history of the diet is particularly recalcitrant to precise reconstruction; however it seems most likely that the poor diet of the earlier period was a phenomenon of rapid change and is now redressed. This possibility is important to explore, even though its empirical basis may be a bit shaky, because the dynamics of change in consumption patterns in systems where women's work supplies the diet is a poorly understood subject. Binet's budget study done in the same year as Masseyeff's nutrition study showed that only 14 percent of expenses went for food, whereas the SEDES study done at the time when cocoa prices hit an all-time low, and sales of food

[16]Infertility has been feared to be very high since the early years of the century but appears not to be as high as, for example, among the Fang in Gabon (Fernandez 1982:162). After review of all the sources, Kuczynski concluded in 1939 that "no statistics support the contention that fertility is declining" (1939:149). There was a high death rate during the 1917 influenza pandemic, and again an important threat in the sleeping sickness epidemic of the 1920s, but no general trend of declining population.

crops were clearly increasing, showed a proportion of expenses devoted to food purchase rising towards 20 percent (1964/5:81).[17] One possible factor in this increase may be the enhanced control which women can exert over a portion of income when they are cash-earners themselves. It suggests that a woman's influence in domestic contexts is considerably greater when the gap in value between her own and her husband's income is narrower, and that she uses this to consolidate her own sphere in its production, income-earning and consumption aspects. Without the historical context, however, this is somewhat simplistic and does not address Tissandier's observation that it is the sales of food crops which account for dietary adequacy.

I will address consumption more broadly in the discussion section, but my own view on the diet issue would combine the argument about domestic power with attention to the rapidity of change. In 1954 men's labor was taken up with cocoa expansion and their income was largely devoted to expenses on housing, clothing, household utensils and other items in a totally changed consumption bundle. The organizational division between men's and women's spheres became much sharper rather quickly; "it is more and more the woman who takes charge of the family diet" (Masseyeff et al. 1958:56). Although this was in part a consequence of general changes in the scale of enterprise, and was relatively simple at the level of both cultural and organizational synchronization of work, it was more challenging to the terms of distribution and exchange between men and women. Men reallocated labor away from melon-seed cultivation, because, as Alexandre and Binet noted from their work in the 1950s, it becomes "absolutely anti-economic" when an economic calculus is applied (1958:28). The fact that the economic calculus was applied to male labor only raises, but does not dictate an answer to, the question of income distribution and the framework for reconstituting consumption. It is very unlikely that this is a rapid process, and therefore it is by no means obvious that either increases or decreases in cash income will bear a rapid and mechanistic relationship to basic "welfare" consumption. Tissandier's study in the savanna north and east of Yaoundé was also done at a time of rapid change in cash income, just following the dramatic decline of a successful small-holder rice scheme (1969; also Guyer 1980).

In the longer run, the adjustments were made which allow, on average, a technically adequate diet. There is no doubt whatsoever that this was achieved by women taking over the food supply and that they did it on the basis of the groundnut field. In people's own views this represents a clear impoverishment of the diet, but rather because of limited variety and the virtual elimination of certain prestige foods, than because entire categories of foods, with specific nutritional values, had been eliminated.

For this period, the model which Boserup builds of female food production for subsistence and male cash crop production holds true (1970). Women's food production supported the whole endeavor of cocoa expansion, and did so with little change in the system of

[17]This figure is reported in inexact terms because the SEDES study made two calculations on all expenses, including and excluding savings. The difference between the two figures is 3 percent in this case.

agricultural knowledge or the definition of the division of labor. The exchange between the sexes in agriculture had been redefined in a way which cut down on men's labor input, gave women some extra tasks during the cocoa harvest, but granted them insecure access to the cocoa income. In the past, no matter how much men had appropriated or how little their work input into food cultivation had been, married women had always benefitted from some male labor and a share of the harvest. Having been subject to high levels of appropriation throughout the interwar years, and having gone into monogamous marriage in part to escape it, they were bound to resist such a subordinate status. Even before cocoa prices started to decline, Binet noted the potential for the old mistrust between men and women to shift to a new locus, conflicts over money: women "cannot fail to envy men, and look for ways of equalling them, either by planting their own crops, or by running away to towns" (1956:59-60).

When cocoa prices began their long decline while other prices remained steady or rose, the control of cash must have become a chronic issue, both mitigated and exacerbated by the rise in women's incomes from the sale of food to the growing city of Yaoundé. Women's farming in the context of the food market is the subject of the following chapters. By way of summary one could point out that, by the 1960s, the women farmers had been through a period of pressure which one might have seen at the time as part of a downward spiral. But this farming pattern has been remarkably flexible and resilient. It had survived through profound changes in family organization. As long as a woman could ensure land access to open the cycle of cultivation and maintain control over the product, it represented a resource which a woman could legitimately control. It is important to note that these two points - women's land rights, and the rubric for assigning shares of the product - were both issues on which the tradition had been variable. "Custom" did not provide an unambiguous set of guidelines beyond the most general claim that land and wealth ultimately belonged to men. These two points become the most prominent issues of dispute in the present.

Discussion

If one looked at the scale of domestic and productive organization alone, there is a great wave in Beti history, beginning well before the colonial period, reaching a crescendo in the inter-war years and almost totally dissipating by the 1950s. Binet caught it on the retreat, when he discerned that a major differentiating factor amongst small-holder farmers was that "Two societies are in partial coexistence: one ancient and one modern, each with its economic cycle, its rhythm of growth and its optimum age" (1956:46). One might see this wave as a superficial phenomenon, but this takes the analogy too literally. First of all, in terms of method alone, the examination of the outer reaches of what is possible in scale variation on the basis of "domestic" relations calls into question a too essentialistic view of "domestic production" as small-scale, vulnerable, and limited in technical innovation. Unusual though they may be in African colonial history, the chiefs' farms reveal a very different potential. Under colonial conditions, successful and innovative large-scale agriculture could be carried out on the basis of

polygynous marriage. Zogo Fouda's enterprise was hardly "household production," even though a French administrator referred to him "un bon père de famille" (CNA APA11894/A). Control of marriage continued to be an important political process well into the mid-twentieth century, not just because "elders" managed to defend conservative interests, but because political and economic innovations such as the colonial administration and cash crop agriculture drew on its organizational potential. They were not domestic processes; they involved an official government position on marriage law and practice.

With the interwar history in mind, the development of small-scale production cannot be seen as a more or less natural evolution, or, in my own view, as a simple resurgence of the structures which underlay the wave of expanded polygyny. The change in scale was part of a reaction against the rural elite, part of a political movement to change the terms as well as the scale of productive and distributional relations. This helps to explain why women might have had an interest in taking over subsistence in support of cocoa production, elaborating the women's field and feminizing the diet to achieve this, but it also indicates why men's use of income tended to prestige and political items; relationships in general were in enormous flux, and official authority was at a low ebb. Women's disillusionment with this arrangement is already clear by the mid-1950s, and helps to contextualize their efforts to earn and control an income in the 1960s.

Alteration in the scale of operations implied, but did not dictate, new terms to relationships. The dramatic divergence in returns to male and female labor resulting from the expansion of cocoa as a men's crop was largely determined by the price structure, outside the familial context. Even when cocoa prices were very low in 1964/5, male labor earned twice as much per hour as female labor.[18] A "customary" rubric for negotiating shares in cocoa income between men and women was developing but, if one can infer from present practice and the ethnography of the 1950s, the level of remuneration was kept outside women's direct control. Before the Yaoundé food market became both large and accessible, women were developing indirect means of diverting men's incomes into their own pockets; they prepared cooked food for sale on cocoa marketing days, traded in imported beer and wine, and distilled a strong local alcohol known as *arki* or *haa*. In villages off the market axes, where women had no other means of earning a cash income, a downward cycle set in during the cocoa price decline, where "Men have little ambition and give themselves up to drink" (De Thé 1968:1532), that is, the *arki* distilled by women. The fact that De Thé found a redevelopment of women's organizations in other villages which were on the road system, suggests that in one way or another, there was an aggressive stance by women on the issue of access to income.

One might suggest that the increasing segregation of task sequences, along with a more individualistic philosophy from Christianity, was setting up a legitimate framework for women to define

[18]Henn has calculated the available data from the SEDES study of 1964/65, which gives hours of labor by sex, estimates of the proportion of women's food sold and income from it. This would indicate that men's cocoa earned roughly twice as much per hour of work than women's agricultural work (1978:169).

what they saw as their own product. The idea of *akuma* (traditional wealth) declined with polygyny; money is just *moni*. It is open to classification on more than one set of criteria; there was still the old distinction between production for use and wealth, overlaid by the distinction between female and male obligations for expenditure, and now glossed with a newer concept of "mine" and "yours." These sets of criteria do not line up neatly and exactly, especially with new sources of income and new consumption items. At present, and I think starting in the 1950s, the French concept of "mise en valeur," which is now written into land tenure law and which I will outline in the following chapter, can be appealed to; whoever opens the cycle of production has rights to the product. The fact that the contours of the field system, and the cultural definitions of male and female nature engraved into it, have persisted alongside a greater individuation of work, means that more than one interpretation can be given to the principle of "mise en valeur," one which favors the rights of men, and the other which gives a greater share to women.

The emergent patterns in the economy depend on the way in which these processes are worked through. Taking the example of the "simple reproduction squeeze," it seems that nutritional adequacy was reinstated precisely at the time that cocoa incomes were at their lowest, and when women's incomes from the sale of food crops were rising. This conjunction is only comprehensible if the basic source of the diet, namely the home supplies from the field which still accounted for 80 percent by value of consumption in 1964, was protected from the effects of the price decline (SEDES 1964/5: 56),[19] that is, if food labor and food income were not reallocated to make up for losses in other categories of livelihood. This is perhaps accounted for by the control of women over the food economy.

There was, however, a more striking response to the price decline which can only be documented through informants' statements. According to them, men could not afford to pay bridewealth in the late 1950s and early 1960s, leading to a postponement of marriage and a general decline in the marriage rate. Since this constituted a male expense, the response was more noted than a response in the food sector.

These observations suggest that the internal structure of the family is critical to patterns of functioning in response to changed conditions and cannot be contained within a archetypal model of peasant functioning. It also underscores Bridget O'Laughlin's (1977) argument that the two meanings of "reproduction" need to be separated, not only conceptually but sociologically; day to day reproduction of the conditions of life can be achieved under conditions which undermine the reproduction of critical relationships, such as marriage.

[19]Self-subsistence in staples was much higher than this, at over 85 percent for maize, cassava, cocoyam, palm oil, green vegetables, plantain, and groundnuts, the last being at 92 percent. At the bottom end of the self-provisioning scale were fresh beef (0 percent), salt (0 percent), dried fish (9 percent), drinks (23 percent), and palm wine (39 percent). There are no major foods between 39 percent and 84 percent of self-provisioning.

Finally, the history of the colonial period shows clearly that there is no simple index of decline in status. The conditions of women's lives were very poor in all respects up until the post-war liberalization. After this, the process is ambiguous, at best. Women were not accumulating independent wealth and status, but the basis was being laid, in monogamous marriage and a feminized food production pattern, for a greater share in the rural product.

PART II:

FAMILY, FARM, AND MAKING A LIVING,

1975

Chapter 4

FAMILY AND LAND IN THE WIDER CONTEXT

For the cocoa region, the independence of Cameroon in 1960 brought several shifts in the social and economic context of smallholder farming. One major effect was the increased involvement of the state in cocoa marketing, building on institutions which had been created during the previous decade. In 1966 following the crisis year of 1964/5, the Caisse de Stabilisation des Prix de Cacao began fixing a uniform, guaranteed producer price for each season. Secondly, a state cooperative marketing system was set up, in part to limit the almost complete monopoly which had been achieved by foreign buyers. By the late 1970s, the cooperatives were the only legal buyers from the farmer, although illegal selling (*coxage*) certainly went on.

The effect which is most relevant to the present subject is the resulting long period of stagnation in the cocoa price. In spite of the gradual climb in prices on the world market, the producer price was kept low for at least a decade after 1964. The margin taken by the Caisse was greatly increased until the farmers were only receiving about one third of the market value of the crop at the port.[1] In 1973/4, their worst year, the distribution of revenues was as follows: the exporters 31 percent, the state 10 percent, the Caisse 30 percent and the farmers 28 percent (Assoumou 1977:282).[2] The Caisse funds were then used for other development projects.

Two other processes also intensified during the 1960s. The growth of the capital city provided a new impetus to urban migration, which in turn set up new dynamics in the rural hinterland since it provided two potentially contradictory stimuli: the attraction of the urban labor market and new heights of demand for rural products.[3] Secondly, the law reform of 7 July 1966 redefined the ultimate aims and concrete provisions of family law and land tenure. These two forces for change were still being worked into rural structures in the mid-1970s. A brief and schematic outline of these two quite complex forces provides a framework for understanding changes in farm and family organization.

The population of Yaounde tripled in the twelve years between the 1957 and 1969 censuses, from 54,343 to 165,810 (Franqueville 1979:323). By the late 1970s it had more than doubled again (R.U.C. 1976). During this period, both the ethnic and sex composition of the immigrant population has changed. In 1957, two thirds of the

[1]The farmers' share of the international price seems to have gone as low as this before the period of price control by the Caisse but not consistently. From the 1957/58 season to 1965/66, the farmers' share was above 50 percent in four out of nine years, and averaged just over 50 percent. From 1966/67 to 1974/75 it was above 50 percent twice out of nine, and averaged 39 percent (Assoumou 1977:255).

[2]The most detailed and comprehensive analysis of prices and wages is Henn 1978.

[3]A history of the Yaoundé urban food supply system has been compiled in Guyer 1983b.

migrants to the capital came from the Beti hinterland; by 1962 the Beti had lost their absolute majority in the city (R.F.C. 1970:43) and by 1967 only one third of migrants came from the local region (Franqueville 1979:334). This does not mean that the absolute numbers of Beti migrants dropped off, but it does mean that the rush to the city was less marked than for other ethnic groups, particularly those from the west of the country. Franqueville found that a local pattern of migration and return had been common for a long time. Only 23 percent of his sample of men from the Eton area had never migrated, 33 percent were currently absent and 44 percent had been away and returned (1971).

The migration of women to the city is less well described. During the 1960s the sex ratio of new urban migrants hovered around equality (Franqueville 1979:330), and the census reports that 67.3 percent of urban women were living in marital arrangements. This implies a pattern of family migration, rather than individual migration for women, although this could well vary by ethnic group.

Demographic data from the research villages suggests a rural sex ratio in the adult ages (16 and over) of 100:143 in the village off the main road, and 100:127 in the village on the road. The major discrepancy is in the 16-30 age group, where the ratio, taking the two cases together, is 100:155. In the next age bracket, from 31 to 45, it is reduced again to 100:121. If this represents a cyclical pattern, rather than the different experience of age cohorts, it clearly indicates a rather young age at which men return to the rural area, one which is quite consonant with the very old expectation that a good proportion of men would not marry before the age of thirty. It means that men considered in their prime are not lacking in village life. And even the "currently absent" may be very much present with respect to family decisions and crises; Franqueville found that when rural people were asked open-ended questions about "emigrants" they did not spontaneously include in that category people who had only gone to Yaoundé rather than further afield (Franqueville 1971:17).

The rural areas therefore appear to offer a basis for making a living, by comparison with urban opportunities. This is partly because, for all its pressures, the rural economy is still engaged in the dynamics of the regional system. The other reason is the structure of the urban labor market, which is largely administrative and professional and therefore offers limited employment to people with only primary levels of education. Above all, it offers little employment opportunity to women beyond the expanding "informal sector." This is a rapidly developing sector, and urban food supply is an important part of it. At independence the colonial framework for rural development embodied in the Provident Societies was dismantled, and the urban food market was left open to competitive entrepreneurship for the first time (Guyer 1980c). So far, and in spite of interventions in the 1970s, it has retained a highly flexible and differentiated structure, which still engages with the small farmers of the rural hinterland, and has not yet bypassed them in favor of large farmers or massive imports. For the moment, Beti women from both the urban and rural areas have a place in the system, but expansion places a premium on the ability of traders to mobilize substantial amounts of capital quickly, which in turn

depends largely on the kinds of collective pooling of resources for which Beti society has no strong institutional framework.

Both farmers and traders from the hinterland will continue to be very important in urban food supply, but it is not altogether clear at the moment what the organizational context will be, and what bases will emerge for the division of labor in the food market. In the mid- and late 1970s N'Sangou argued that a high proportion of Yaoundé's food still came from the immediate hinterland, and 45 percent of this from the Departement de la Lékié. In fact, he predicted that by 1990 Eton peasants would get most of their income from traditional food for the market rather than cocoa (1975:11,16).

In summary, the years following independence were characterized by declining and then stagnating cocoa prices, but an expanding market for food crops. Cocoa, however, remained a better proposition than food crops in terms of returns to labor (Henn 1978), so that men's incentives to turn to food production in any major way were blunted. Consequently, both the pressures and incentives to earn an income increased for rural women.

The momentous legal changes of 1966 in theory ushered in an era of increased rights for women as well. The long run implications of the implementation process are worthy of an entire project in themselves, but the sources at present are few and schematic.[4] As expounded by Melone, who is the main source on the philosophy behind the law, the guiding principle was the eventual destruction of control of resources by lineages. The colonial governments had made piecemeal, self-contradictory and ultimately very conservative adjustments. The point now was to aim for transformation: "If then the transformation of kinship structures remains the ultimate aim, this aim cannot be achieved unless the lineage is considered as an obstacle to development.... The goal to aim for is to instate a family which is reduced to the minimum: father, mother and children." (Melone 1972:68,73).

The two prongs of attack were through land tenure and marriage, the former explicitly conceived as resting on the latter. The provisions on marriage for the first time dissociated the legal status of the union and of its offspring from the payment of bridewealth. A couple should be under no restriction of choice imposed by the family and should consent fully to the marriage. To ensure these conditions, marriage by a magistrate was instated as the only legally recognized form of union. A whole set of further provisions elaborated the rights of a woman with respect to marriage, her rights of ownership of personal resources within marriage, and her claims in, and legal authority over, her children. The essential point for rural people was less these other provisions, than that "thus disconnected from marriage, bridewealth no longer has anything to do with filiation," the only relevant ties between a child and his father being "the ties of blood" (Melone 1972:100).

In land law, vigorous moves were made towards individual ownership. One important innovation was the creation of a category of land declared "vacant and without claimant," which reverted to the

[4]Melone 1972 is the only interpretive source I have found on the changes in family law. There may, therefore, be other important and differing opinions on it, or sources examining the implications of implementation.

state as Patrimoine Collective Nationale (collective national property). With respect to land already held in customary tenure, people were to be encouraged to establish the rights on which they could base a claim for formal matriculation in individual tenure. To obviate the claims of individuals representing either collective or absentee ownership, the law "aims to assure that development (*mise en valeur*) is the work of the actual person who occupies the land" (Melone 1972:163).

Aspects of implementation will be discussed with respect to the research villages in following chapters. Suffice it here to indicate some apparently unforeseen implications. The land provisions are fundamentally imprecise for two reasons: in a system with nested rights and an ideology of key tasks, the definition of who, exactly, has "really" developed the land is highly disputable. In the Lékié it is a battle, ranging in technique from oratory to machetes, to establish clear enough personal claims to come close to meeting the conditions for matriculation. Weber found that: "the Bible, the Gospels, the Law are often cited and interpreted, reviewed through the filter of 'Custom,' in disputes over land" (1974:35).

Secondly, the critical issue of inheritance was not dealt with explicitly, even though the marriage provisions had profound implications for children's rights. The legal changes inserted new stages, and therefore a new indeterminacy, to inheritance. Rural couples married by customary exchange of bridewealth are now referred to as "fiancés" in law cases, and each individual child has to be separately legitimated. If a man can go to court and either own or disown children in an optative manner, which filiation "by blood" is bound to imply, then inheritance becomes manipulable in new ways. Only those whose parents are married in civil law and have their father's recognition, can be sure of their inheritance rights in court. The rights of children born to couples married by customary payments depend on the continued recognition of customary inheritance rules. The rights of children born to widows, who would have had a legitimate status in the past, are now subject to the legal recognition of their natural father. Finally, the rights of children born to unmarried women remain at the complete discretion of the parental and grandparental generation.

The importance of all this in the present rural areas is open to speculation, but the structure of the population which will deal with it in one way or another is very clear; it is a society in which the age of marriage for women has risen, the inheritance of widows has been outlawed, and the sexual freedom of unmarried women is a matter for their own decision and discretion. Hence, it is a population in which the numbers of people in the categories with potentially disputable claims is rising. Of course, most claims do not go to court. They are supported by local means of legitimation which are conditioned by, but not derivative from, the larger legal system.

Discussion

The shifts in the regional economy have undoubtedly narrowed, although by no means eclipsed, the cash income gap between men and women. A "cash calculus" has begun to penetrate the former insulation of food production in the Beti hinterland. Along with the grad-

ual assimilation of the new legal framework, these changes taken together are potentially powerful forces for reshaping domestic relations.

Reviewing the dimensions of domestic organization discussed earlier, by the 1960s the issue of scale had been more or less settled already. Restricted family size and monogamy were the dominant forms of familial and marital relations. Likewise, the synchronization of productive activities had been gradually reformulated to give two largely separate cycles of labor. It was the terms of exchange in familial relationships which emerged as the central issue in the 1960s. Melone's discussion of the marriage law points out that the "family" was now constituted in a de facto, ad hoc, manner, embedded in a formal legal matrix which he called "the juridical vacuum," where "everyone applies, at their own convenience, the law which suits them" (1972:61). Local institutional frameworks were more specific, but contained a whole series of anomalies and dilemmas of which, for example, the problem of assigning land rights to non-inherited widows and their children, was only one. Even the passage of the 1966 law did not clarify all the details which would be required to institute a internally coherent, classic, peasant family system. Inheritance was the critical relationship omitted from the provisions.

The patterns of production which emerge out of the inevitable struggles and negotiations, will have a very important effect on the future place of the Beti hinterland in the regional economy. The emergence of occupational specialization amongst women, in food production, processing and trade, will depend on the constraints on diversification of which intra-familial relations are a crucial component. The relative places of food crops and cocoa in the rural areas will also be mediated by male/female relations. People's strategies for holding on to land rights, compensating for land degradation or declining farm area, mobilizing liquid capital and constituting networks for aggressive involvement in a competitive market, all depend to some degree on the changing terms of relationship in familial contexts.

This second part of the monograph therefore takes the terms of familial relations as its central theme.

Chapter 5

ACCESS TO RESOURCES: KINSHIP, LAND AND HOUSEHOLD ORGANIZATION

Beti women have always acquired the right and the obligation to work their farms through the descent and marriage system, by virtue of their relationship with a man. The constraints and possibilities within which they work therefore operate through three different sets of circumstances: 1) The conditions determining men's access to agricultural land; a woman cannot farm without a valid right to the use of land, therefore the rights of her brother, father or husband are of great importance; 2) Those conditions which affect the frequency of, and legal-jural framework for, the different relationships which women can enter into with men; marriage law and practice, and the constituent relations of household organization, are continually shifting in ways which affect both individual dilemmas and decisions, and aggregate demographic trends. 3) Those conditions which affect the nature of the transactions, exchanges and decisions which constitute the everyday activities of making a living in a family context.

This last topic is the subject of later chapters. The first two constitute the current structures of resource access which are discussed in the first two sections of this chapter. The final section of the chapter examines household organization.

Kinship and Land Access

The Beti peoples have held a segmentary and patrilineal ideology for as far back as can be documented. But patrilineal kinship has a checkered history as the basis for formation of local groups. In the context of migration and the foundation of new settlements by polygynous headmen, the collective jural identity of descendants of a single ancestor was activated only in certain ritual and military situations (Quinn 1980). Inheritance was lineal, not lateral. The basis for this emphasis on marriage and alliance was eventually destroyed during colonial rule, and at the same time, villages were permanently and forcibly sedentarized. As a result, present settlements are centered around groups of men, of equal social status, related by patrilineal descent. Descent from one's father, and hence membership in the larger clan, has become by far the most important means for men to claim land and membership in the village as an administrative unit. This is less the result of a reversion to lineage principles, than of the continuing adjustment between rising land values and the customary legal sanctification of inheritance in the male line.

Usually an entire region consisting of perhaps ten or twelve villages, is dominated by the members of a single patriclan, known by the term *mvog* and the name of the founder. The larger clan structure therefore still exists, with a genealogy going back to the crossing of the Sanaga River in the eighteenth century. In some

cases, a clan is recognized as an administrative sub-unit of the arrondissement, with its own official chief. Clans without this formal status have sometimes organized and petitioned to acquire it. The new framework of village life has therefore changed the meaning of the genealogy. It is no longer simply the reference point for regulating exogamy and religious affairs, but rather for activating claims as an administrative unit, at its higher levels, and determining access to land, at its lower levels.

The most important framework for daily life is the smallest segment, descended from an ancestor usually only one or two generations removed from the present oldest men. In most cases the houses belonging to the members of this unit are close together, and can be referred to by the term *dzal* (or *tan* in Eton), which was appropriated by the French to refer to an administrative village. Like the term *mvog*, the term *ndabot* which is used for this group can be applied to other units of greater inclusion, but when a woman is asked *"One mininga ya ndabot fe?"* ("in which family are you a wife?"), it is generally this group to which she refers, and it is within this group that she has to find her place. The men are ranked by seniority, but the flows of influence are by no means mechanistically determined by birth order alone. The effectiveness of all leadership, both male and female, depends more on personal capacities than position.

When she marries, a woman sets up a separate household with her husband, but she also takes a position within the wider family, partly determined by her husband's status and partly by her own seniority among the wives. Wives are ranked according to the length of time they have been married into the family. One woman, usually the most senior whose husband is still living, is in charge of the women's side of family activities such as the ceremonies of marriage and death. The spheres of male and female authority are generally separate. Men regulate the allocation of inheritable resources such as land and bridewealth; women regulate and advise among themselves on health, childrearing, and domestic quarrels.

In the Eton area, this small group is at present the center of both close cooperation and the bitterest of disputes, the vast majority of which center on land. In fact, land has become an accepted idiom for disputes which originate in other issues, as well as being a fundamental and real bone of contention itself. By now there are several generations of accretion in the operative principles of land tenure, but far from adding to a set of accepted precedents, each has added a new inconsistency. As long as the land was sufficient for cocoa plots, food farms, and fallow, people appear to have accepted the fact that "their" land might be within the territory occupied by a different clan a hundred years ago, or that land had been loaned, borrowed, expropriated by chiefs or reappropriated by villagers. But land has become very short and the application of general principles involves an intricacy of interpretation for which there is little precedent. Although land and cocoa farms are inherited by individuals, and the government has tried to exert pressures to get people to register titles to land, it is absolutely impossible at present to draw up boundaries and titles (Weber 1974).

Within the *ndabot*, the adult men hold residual rights in one another's land because they all received it by inheritance from the

same ancestor. If a man dies without an heir, his land reverts to his closest junior kinsman in the male line; no property can be inherited from a junior to a senior unless, as sometimes happens, permission is granted by the customary court. The basic principles are very simple, tht fundamental rights rest collectively with the descendants of the founder of the settlement, that use rights are held by individuals by virtue of inheritance from their father or by opening up new land, and that temporary use rights can be granted without alienating the land itself. The division of property is usually done by the father himself before his death, or by the elders of the family sometime thereafter. In theory, each group of full siblings takes an equal share of the cocoa, and the area of bush land which their mother cultivated during their father's lifetime, that is her *bikodog*, her groundnut-fallow. Sometimes the bush land is not divided until considerably later, especially if the father was monogamous. Within groups of full siblings, the division is an internal affair, and may take a variety of forms, where rights to cocoa land may be balanced by rights in a sister's bridewealth, payment of school fees, and responsibility for bringing up other siblings.[1]

The very simplicity and generality of these principles makes them extraordinarily difficult to apply with any consistency; was a piece of land really bush (*afan*) or was it someone's groundnut fallow (*ekodog*), before another cultivated it? Was a piece of land loaned or ceded? Was a particular marriage, or a particular child, legitimate? What kind of rights does a widow have in the cocoa farm she and her husband established together? Clearly the women who marry into the family, and who cultivate its land, are both pawns and participants in the disputes which arise, pawns because they depend on their husbands for access to farm land, and participants because the very act of working it reaffirms his ownership of it, and their children's future rights to it. Many women play a very active part in land disputes, generally on their own and their children's account.

Disputes within the *ndabot* arise around three central themes: (1) the clash of equally accepted principles, (2) boundary problems arising from attempts to encroach, and (3) definitions of legitimacy, and deliberations about the rights of illegitimate children.

The main example of the first type of dispute is the clash of inheritance rights with long term use rights. The problem is really one of the meaning of *mise en valeur*. In the past, land rights were established by clearing the forest; that a field was groundnut fallow meant not only that it was in fallow, in technical terms, but that it was allotted to someone. But land can return to bush, or the planting of permanent trees can be considered a more powerful development (*mise en valeur*) than the previous cultivation of food crops. On the other hand, people justify residual claims in one another's inherited land on the grounds that their father set the process of use in motion, that is, that there was a previous stage of *mise en valeur*. When land was plentiful and cocoa not yet established, loans

[1]The following division is recorded in the court records at Okola (Judgement 4/74-75): the elder brother, a chauffeur by occupation, received the widow, 800 cocoa trees and a share of the empty land; the younger brother, a farmer, received the six daughters, 551 cocoa trees, 40,000 francs CFA which the older had already received in bridewealth for one of the girls, and a share of empty land.

were frequent and plots tended to revert gradually to the borrower since he had brought it under cultivation and planted permanent trees on it. In the current situation of increasing population density, the original owner or his heir will often try to reclaim the land, on a variety of grounds: that the original transfer was made without the consent of all relevant parties, that the terms of the agreement have been broken by the grantee planting permanent crops without specific permission, or that the original agreement is not binding on the next generation (Weber 1974:32). The idea that a "sale" is a definitive and complete transfer of all rights is not universally accepted, and since no legal sale can be registered until the land has been matriculated, the implications of contracts about land are often disputable.[2] Until very recently none of these agreements has been officially recorded so they rumble on menacingly and often inconclusively.

A fairly frequent occurrence is the loan of land by a trustee for a minor, who is usually the junior brother or oldest son of the deceased. By the time the inheritor comes of age the land is already planted, *mise en valeur,* and the lessee therefore holds powerful rights, at least in the crops and trees. In favor of the heir is his parents' previous working of the land, and the general principle that every legitimate member of the group should have enough land to farm. Against him is not only the treecrops already planted, but the pre-colonial tradition that minors were themselves part of the inheritance and were not allotted their own share in the first place. This latter principle was applicable mainly to the inheritance of rights in people, when these constituted the main form of wealth; applied to land, they have quite different implications.

The minority of an heir, or a man's absence in the city, is often the occasion for encroachment by those abutting his property, namely his close patrilineal kinsmen. With nothing except the elders' recollections of the division of the property to go on, it can be virtually impossible to prevent encroachment by a determined and powerful kinsman unless the inheritor is there to defend the boundaries. Even men of civil service rank may have to struggle to keep their village property intact against the depradations of kin. Here, the women of the family can be of critical importance. No one knows a man's land better than his wife, and when she is widowed, a conscientious woman farms all over the land to keep it intact against encroachment and to demonstrate the boundaries to her children.

The disputes surrounding the rights of children born outside traditional or civil marriage are new and likely to increase in importance. In the past, very few children can have been born with no jural father. Now, child marriage and widow inheritance are against the law while, at the same time, there are absolutely no

[2]There is also a general vagueness to conceptions about which rights can and cannot be transferred by sale or inheritance, versus those held by an individual for his lifetime alone. One man complained that he had not been able to inherit his father's government retirement pension when the old man died; he had been in government service most of his life, and the idea that a son could not inherit his father's accumulated assets was one the son was willing to contest. Likewise, within the category of transferable rights, the fate of residual inherited rights in a portion of property which an individual has "sold" are problematic if the law has not defined inheritance rights with a precision which excludes large loop-holes.

restrictions on sexual activity for currently unmarried women. In one of the study villages, 31 of the children under 16 were born to single women, and 4 to widows, out of a total child population of 169, that is, about 20 percent were illegitimate at that time.

It is unclear how these children will stand when it comes to inheritance. Individual circumstances will play a major part in the decisions. The fortunate ones, those actually welcomed, are the sons born into a family with only daughters or with no children at all. Daughters and sometimes sisters may bear a child pre-maritally in order to leave an heir for their father or brother. Others, such as the sons of a woman whose father already has several sons, who themselves already have children, can never be on an equal footing within the descent group. Although the customary practice put them under the guardianship of their mother's father, they were always considered inferior, *tsali*.

The most bitterly felt legitimacy cases involve the children of a widow because their natural father is almost always an established man of the family into which their mother married, and not an unrelated stranger. Usually everyone knows who the natural father is, but if he refuses to recognize the children, they can inherit neither from him, nor from the estate of their mother's deceased husband. One case known to me was at the root of profound family quarrels. A woman who is now quite old was widowed at an early enough age to bear one further child by her husband's younger brother, who would have inherited her in the past. He already had a wife, son and membership in the church, and refused to take her in polygynous marriage. Almost thirty years later, the son of the union is in constant dispute with his two sets of half-siblings, the children of his mother and her husband, and the children of his natural father and his legitimate wife. The first set gave him a small inheritance from their own share of their father's land, consisting of an area of arable land and 100 cocoa trees, by comparison with their own shares of over 1,000 trees each. But the tensions flare up constantly.

This, then, is the situation into which women marry, and the legal context of their farming work. Women do not own land, but married women perform the crucial function of maintaining their husbands' land rights, and providing for their sons by knowing and working the land. Only the work of a woman married into the group, that is, a wife or a widow can perform this function; a daughter or sister is considered still part of her mother's enterprise. And only marriage ensures a woman of a particular land allotment. For the moment, as I will discuss later in connection with differences in farm size, there is no obvious differentiation among married women which can be directly traced to the land ownership of her husband, although there certainly could be some subtle differences in factors such as the length of the fallow.[3]

More important is the possibility that differentiation will develop between the children of married and unmarried mothers, because of the limited access of the unmarried to male resources. It

[3]Any investigation of this issue would require a larger sample and greater precision of agronomic data. I suggest it only because married women did occasionally borrow land from their natal family to make a food farm. One woman gave short fallow on her own plots as the reason for this.

is striking that, once married, women choose to remain in their marital homes, even under difficult circumstances. In one of the villages studied, 17 women over thirty years of age had no children and only 4 of these were daughters of the village who had returned home after unsatisfactory marriages. Five of the rest were widows who chose to stay in their marital home without either a husband or children. One childless widow had been the young thirtieth wife of a polygynous chief who had forty wives altogether; he died in the 1930s and she had been inherited several times since then but had remained in her marital home. In the Eton region, it is the unusual woman who leaves her husband once the marriage has been formally contracted between the families because her rights to fields and her hopes for her children are better realized as a wife than as a sister. It may also be that the small size of family units makes it a little more difficult to attach oneself, especially if one has no surviving full siblings.[4]

A married women's rights to her own plots are quite considerable and have been strengthened by the courts. Once a wife has been given a plot by her husband or mother-in-law, she has a right to return to it after the fallow period, or to loan it to a friend. Even her husband cannot take the fields away for his own purposes without her consent and without finding new plots as a replacement. Several court decisions granted a woman who had been wrongfully denied her fields through divorce or repudiation, sums up to 60,000 francs CFA compensation (about $240).[5]

The Social and Legal Framework of Marriage

Over the past two decades a significant proportion of women are remaining outside the bonds of marriage up into their mid or late 20s. In one of the villages studied in 1975-6, 23 percent of the women 16 and over were not yet married, and 8 percent were separated and returned home to live with their natal kin. In the other, the comparable figures were 15 percent and 3 percent. Sixty-nine per cent and 82 percent respectively of the adult women were living in the village because they had married in, and could therefore claim the maximum of land rights for themselves. Only 47 percent and 61 percent were currently married, able to pass on fairly unambiguous rights to any children they subsequently bore.

In addition to the economic forces of the 1950s and 1960s, the new legal provisions have rendered the whole marriage system open to new directions. Women's rights with respect to divorce have been strengthened. A woman can now bring a divorce case, and defend herself against wrongful repudiation. Court decisions show that a man cannot divorce a wife on the grounds of sterility or refusal to obey a senior wife. Court records also show that a whole series of different kinds of complaints by the wife will be considered, such as neglect and violence, which gives women greater leverage than

[4]In one case, an elderly woman had returned to her natal village but no longer had any kin close enough to take her in. A family of strangers kept an eye on her welfare, and a distant relative gave her a few patches of land to use. She lived in an unfinished house.

[5]There is a procedure for getting these payments made, but it is unclear to me how, or how often, it succeeds.

they had in the past. It seems from these particular local records that the court rarely actually grants a divorce at the woman's request, especially when the issue is one which is quite undefined in either legal or customary terms, such as neglect; in one such case, after 16 years of marriage and five children, a neglected wife was instructed to return to her husband and he was "invited to tend to her needs on a regular basis" (Okola, Premier Degré, 25/1974-5). Men are very aware of the changed context and cost of divorce, and may refer to this when justifying a conservative and cautious attitude to civil law marriage.

While the civil code has made marriage a more demanding contract for men, the provisions on bridewealth have made customary marriage less binding. All the court records refer to couples married with bridewealth alone as fiancés, a category which is distinguished from *union libre;* a woman living in a free union is known as *ebɔn* in the Beti language, and is considered completely uncommitted. This means that a woman married in customary practice alone can sue only for "rupture de fiançailles," not divorce, and that each of her children has to be separately legitimated.

The payment of bridewealth still legitimizes a marriage in the eyes of villagers, but many women see the dangers of the new legal system and it is they who urge their husbands to contract civil marriage as well. The unwillingness of a man to do this when he has been married many years to a woman who has born him children is often cited in court as evidence of neglect. Young men expressed some reluctance to contract legal marriage because all Beti tend to marry under the *régime monogamique,* owing to the influence of the Church and the general refusal of women to marry under polygynous law.[6] Men want to preserve the right to marry another wife if they wish, but once they are committed to a monogamous legal marriage, taking another wife without the first wife's permission is grounds for divorce. Even with the first wife's consent, a formal status difference is introduced between the wives, one being a wife and the other a fiancée in the eyes of the law. This, in turn, introduces possible distinctions between the two sets of children. Women want to push ahead with civil marriage, even in the case where the husband turns out to be a poor support in one way or another, because it provides a legal context for strengthening claims. One married mother of two school age children, for example, was quite explicit about this; her husband's status was ambiguous because he was an unlegitimated child of an inherited widow. The only way in her power to strengthen her own and her children's claims was to formalize the marriage and thereby eliminate that particular indeterminacy in their status. All incentives for women are to marry in civil law, but in the two villages studied, 29 percent of married women were still married by bridewealth alone.

A third stage of marriage is church marriage. Most people are practicing Catholics and the Church expects that they will eventually consecrate the union. Marriage is therefore contracted in three stages, within three different institutional frameworks.

[6]The two legal frameworks are the *régime monogamique* and the *régime polygamique.* Couples have to declare the régime under which they choose to marry because it affects the rights of all parties in relation to grounds for divorce and the attendant property division.

Bridewealth validates the union at the level of the two families, the civil contract submits it to the provisions of the legal code for, in the Beti case, the *régime monogamique*, and a religious wedding gives the union the blessing of the Church. The timing, the cost and the implications of each is a subject for passionate general debate, and for acrimonious dispute in particular cases. People's ability to force them into an affordable series of *rites de passage*, or a single coherent system of rights and duties is limited.

In the process, it seems that an increasing proportion of unions and children fall into a category where legitimacy and property rights lack clear definition. In the two villages studied, only 35 percent of the women currently living and farming there, were married in civil as well as customary law. Table 1 shows the marital status of village women.

Table 2:
Marital Status of Women, Two Villages[7]

	No.	Percent
Married	167	54
Civil law	109	35
Bridewealth	49	16
Unknown	9	3
Single	62	20
Separated	15	5
Widowed	67	21
Total	311	100

Eventually bridewealth marriages may be legalized; most of them concerned women under thirty. The single women will probably marry; they are also concentrated in the under thirty age group. But half of the single and separated women have at least one child to support and all of them have to make a living. Given the ambiguities of the law, and the shifts in demographic patterns, marital status is a potential differentiating factor among women, both for resource access in the short run and for establishing their children in the long run. The constraints and possibilities for each category of women have to be analyzed, not only the morally normative category of married women.

Relationships and Households

Since a woman's claim on productive resources depends on her position in the descent and marriage systems, each of the most important statuses will be described separately, before turning to the ways in which these relations are combined in households.

[7]This figure of 54 percent is slightly lower than the 56 percent already published in another paper (1980b:350). Six *ebon* (women in free unions) have been reclassified for the present purpose, from "married" to "single" (5), and "separated" (1).

Married Women. The whole cultural tradition favors being a wife over being a daughter or sister. All the incentives in the rural areas converge to encourage women to aspire to marriage and to remain married. Security of access to land, assurance of an inheritance for one's children and status among the women of the village depend on being married. At the village level, bridewealth payment is still the means of acquiring these rights.

Once the marriage is contracted between the families and the bridewealth paid from one father or guardian to the other, it can only be ruptured peacefully through the repayment of the bridewealth in its entirety. The Beti system differs from many other West African systems in this regard because the value of a wife does not decrease in direct proportion to the number of children she leaves her husband as his heirs. This reflects the central importance which marriage used to have as a means of forming political alliances, which was incorporated into colonial marriage law under the chiefs. By now it is considered to be Beti custom. Unless the marriage breaks up very early, when the money is still in the family, it is very difficult for a woman to leave her husband without bringing financial problems on her father. Men may keep meticulously detailed inventories of the cash and kind components of bridewealth against such an eventuality, including items such as "transport," a dress for the wife's mother, and "medical treatment for the wife" (Okola 139/1973-74). Consequently women consider themselves committed to their marital homes.[8]

The birth of children is now, as it has always been, the major event which fixes a woman's commitment to her husband's village. If a mother leaves, she forfeits her rights in the children, who have to be returned to their father by the age of seven. People are particularly aware of this in the Lékié, where land shortage is a problem. As strong as the sentimental attachment of mother and children is, the capital issue is that the mother's agricultural work defends her children's rights against the possible advantages which her husband's subsequent children by another wife might gain.

The bridewealth and inheritance systems make it difficult for a married woman with children to consider alternatives to her current marriage, but there are also positive inducements to remain married, above all, the inalienable right a married woman has to her own plots on her husband's land. When a new wife comes into a family, her mother-in-law grants her fallow plots within her own allotment, may give her seed if her own mother did not, and supports her until her first farms begin to produce enough of the full range of produce that she can be self-supporting. During this first year, a new wife considers herself a stranger, *nnəŋ*. It takes four or five years to develop the whole complement of fields she needs for the standard two years of cultivation followed by the minimum two to three years

[8]Eton women may be more committed than other Beti women. Certainly the idea that marriage is unstable is current among Ewondo people, and Fernandez is convinced of this for the Fang. He attributes it to "population decline through declining birth rate and the high incidence of infertility, and an imbalance in sex ratios" (1982:162). The Eton population does not seem to be declining and infertility is not such a dramatic issue. In the two villages, 45 percent of the population was 15 or under; 28 percent of the women over 30 had no living children. It should be emphasized, however, that these are census data; they do not derive from reconstructed reproductive histories.

of fallow. By this time, she generally has at least one child, and is considered to be established independently of her mother-in-law.

A married woman's right to her farm is not a simple function of intra-household relationships, but is backed and recognized by the *ndabot* (lineage) and the wider village community. She has this right in her husband's home village even if there is no good will in the marriage, even if they no longer live together and he is resident elsewhere in the country, and, of course, after his death. Because a married woman has this right, many of the wives of urban employees go out to their husband's natal villages every year to make a farm and may, in old age retire to a village where they have never lived for any length of time before.

Access to labor and cash income is a different issue altogether because there are patterns or guidelines, but no sanctions outside the marriage relationship itself, in the lineage or village. In theory a husband should clear his wife's fields, every season. In fact, she cannot count on it; some do, some do not, and yet others do it erratically. Many an older man gives up once he becomes an established man, *nnyamoro*, when his wife has no more small children and his oldest son should be available to help. The variability is wide, from the man who calls and rewards a work party to clear an *esep* field for his wife, to the man who barely knows where his wife's food fields are. A woman has to be able to feed her dependents from her own efforts if necessary.

Control of income and the division of responsibilities will be discussed in more detail later, but the lack of a clear rubric can be indicated here, as part of the general introduction to different marital statuses. Housing, clothing and all the children's costs are supposed to be the husband's charge; "After all," one woman said, "they are his children, if I leave, they stay." But if he fails or defaults there is usually nothing to be done about it. When asked "Does your husband buy the meat, soap, kerosene etc.?" the reply was almost invariably "If he has any money," and if not, "I've got my two hands, I'll earn it myself." During the cocoa season there are particularly powerful expectations that a man will reward his wife with a cash sum of money, a basket of cocoa and/or a share of the low grade cocoa. In part this is a direct return for work done and is given to other women for comparable work. But a wife expects a share over and above this, analogous to her own share of the melon-seed harvest in the past, by virtue of her responsibility for his children. The actual content is variable, and affected quite sharply by fluctuations in prices, conditions of sale, and particular expenses which the farmer plans to cover that year. There are some women who receive very little; a payment as low as 1,000 francs is recorded among the complaints of a woman requesting divorce. But in the last resort there is no authority, either in the kin group or in court, which can protect a wife against this kind of neglect.

When she earns her own money, the concensus of public opinion is that her cash income should be hers, on a principle analogous to *mise en valeur*. Some husbands try to find ways of tapping into their wives' market income, especially during the seasons when male incomes are low. If they succeed there is no framework to differentiate a loan from a gift, so most wives in this situation develop subterfuges for protecting their money: keeping their sales a secret, storing their cash reserves at a friend's house, and con-

verting it into goods as quickly as possible. However, when they receive the credit association purse there is the general expectation that, as with their groundnut harvest in the past, a third or a quarter will be ceded to the husband in recognition of dependence, regardless of whether he contributed. There is here, as I will discuss in more detail later, a whole contentious area where a woman's rights to the fruits of her own labor cross-cut her husband's rights to his share, or to the "surplus" over subsistence needs. Most men recognize that their wife's income is almost entirely spent on items which fall under the category of family subsistence, but, at the same time, the principle is still current that a man has the right to ask money from his wife and use it in his own personal interests.

In summary, a wife has certain basic rights in her husband's lineage, the most important of which are her rights to a kitchen of her own and a farm. Her rights vis-a-vis her husband, in his labor and cash income are less secure.

Widows. A widow (*nkus*) is a kind of married woman as long as she remains in her husband's village. In the past she would have been inherited as a full wife by one of her husband's heirs if she was still of child-bearing age. If she had an adult son, she became a dependent in his hamlet. Even today, a widow "belongs to" (*a woge ai*) a male member of her husband's descent group, in the sense that she falls under his authority for the negotiation of her children's marriages and often for the management of the cocoa farm. Table 2 shows the importance of husbands' patrikinsmen in the category of widows' guardians. Table 3 shows that all widows with sons are assigned to men in this category, and only 11 out of the 42 widows without sons are assigned to men in another kin category.

Table 3:
Attribution of Widows, Two Eton Villages (N=16)

Attribution	Percent	
Husband's patrikinsman	89	
--own son		45
--husband's son		12
--other		32
Own patrikinsman	10	
Other	1	
Total	100	

Table 4:
Attribution of Widows, With and Without Sons,
Two Eton Villages (N=67)

Attribution	Motherhood Status	
	With sons (percent)	Without sons (percent)
Husband's patrikinsman		
- Own son	45	--
- Husband's son	1	11
- Other	12	20
Own patrikinsman	--	10
Other	--	1
Total	58	42

A widow assigned to her own or a co-wife's adult son finds her access to resources altered the least. She retains her kitchen and her plots, and may lose the labor and cash transfers of conjugality. Many men do make the effort to clear farms for their elderly mothers, or engage work parties to do it for them, and many also try to provide their mothers with a little cash, especially during the cocoa harvest.

Much more problematic is the position of a widow whose sons are minors. In the national legal code, she is considered the heir to her husband's property, and even in custom, her work in establishing the cocoa farm is recognized as establishing some continuing rights in the proceeds. On the other hand, land cannot pass to the widow because that means alienating it from the patrikin who hold residual claims. One court case in the Lékié continued for months and caused threats of violence, because a widow tried to register her rights to the cocoa farm which she and her husband had established together.

The trustee from the family may allow the widow to manage her own affairs, including the farm, its income, the various debts and assets left by her husband, and all the responsibilities to the children which do not absolutely require male intervention. The most important thing she cannot yet do, in custom though not in law, is negotiate bridewealth transactions. Other than this, the trustee may make no effort to incorporate the widow's economy into his own. However, with the cultural support for outright widow inheritance, many trustees take over some or all of the conjugal functions, including cohabitation with the widow. In this case, his every interest is geared towards his own wife and children, and it is rare for him to put as much effort into the widow's cocoa farm as into his own, to give her the income from it, to clear her fields, and above all, to protect the integrity of the land itself.

The degree of autonomy the widow achieves depends almost entirely on how shrewd and how determined she is in defending herself, because she will usually get public support if she takes the issue to a village hearing. One widow who was receiving nothing from her husband's cocoa farm, went out and started to fell the trees with her machete in protest. A village meeting gave her support, she was granted full management of the farm, and since then has hired laborers to do the clearing and joined the marketing cooperative under

her own name. Another much younger widow bore a child by her guardian, but got very little support from him, partly because he was already in charge of his own wife, children, his mother and another inherited widow. Her oldest sons were then in their late teens, working in the city, and very aware of the danger to their income and inheritance which the situation presented. A widow who fails to assert herself loses resources, and becomes the equivalent of a neglected wife, with limited cash income, no access to a man's money, and no-one to repair the house, clear the fields, or help to pay bridewealth for her sons.

Finally, a widow without sons can be in a highly vulnerable position. Insofar as she retains any rights in the land, she stands between the heir and his full control of the property. Here, being assertive can be much more problematic because public opinion will not intervene to protect such a widow's rights to the cocoa farm. It is considered a conjugal issue. I have come across several cases, in the Lekie and elsewhere, where the widow was essentially driven away.

Single Women. A woman starts off her productive career as a daughter in her father's household, where she is considered an appendage, or apprentice of her mother. It is her mother who finds a portion of land for her to cultivate from her own allotment; the issue is never referred to her father. In fact, the whole process of setting up her own fields is gradual. From a very young age she helps her mother, and may take over all the domestic duties during her mother's absence or illness from the age of about twelve. It is a small step to having a corner of her mother's field to plant whatever she likes, and finally, by the time she reaches marriageable age at about sixteen or seventeen, having a plot of her own, always within her mother's portion of land.

A young, unmarried woman is usually an erratic farmer. She has no right to her father's or guardian's help with clearing new plots, nor to their provision of groundnuts for seed if she has none of her own. She can always count on her mother for food, although she does have to raise any money she needs for personal purposes from her own resources. If she bears children, this becomes a much more serious concern, and she may even draw on the possibilities of the division of labor with her mother to branch out into trade. When she leaves in marriage her mother simply takes back any fields her daughter has cultivated; they were never "her" fields in the first place, in the sense of establishing rights of return or validating her father's or guardian's ownership rights.

Separated Women. Almost all separated or divorced women live with their natal family, and as far as I know they are never refused the right of return after a failed marriage. However, their status is low. Given the pressures to stay in a husband's village, it is a quite select group which returns home. In one village, of the nine separated women, four had no living children, a further three had no children living with them, and the remaining two had one daughter each. So they were women with low fertility. They are also anomalous, in the sense that there was, in the past, no clearly defined position for a fully adult *ngɔn*, daughter, in a village.

A separated woman is always given land to cultivate, but it consists of plots here and there which no-one else is using, rather

than an allotment of her own. Her brother has no obligation to help her to clear the fields, nor to provide inputs, and she, in turn, has no clear obligation to provide for him and his children. She is always subordinate, and, in a sense, in debt. In any dispute she may be reminded that she once left in marriage, comes back on sufferance and has no right to complain about the conditions. In one family dispute between an extremely assertive separated woman in her mid-40s and her junior full brother, the entire outcome was determined on this point, and not on the question of who was right in the dispute itself. She had to listen to long and impassioned public tirades against her sexual activities and was required to acknowledge fault in making the complaint in the first place. For his part, the junior brother was advised to make a small offering to her, to counteract the humiliation and in recognition of her seniority by age, and to give some consideration to the substantive issue itself. In all family affairs, a separated woman defers to the senior wife of the family, even if the latter is considerably her junior.

The framework of these relationships between men and women is different enough that the kind of shifts in marriage age, remarriage rates for widows, and divorce which are taking place may affect profiles of female resource control, may be a factor affecting any new occupational differentiation among women, and indicates possible grounds for differentiation among men in the next generation.

These are longer run structural shifts which the logic of the present relationships may imply. The way in which they in fact work out, depends also on the pooling processes, divisions of labor, income and status, which take place in the domestic units into which the various dyadic gender relationships are combined.

The Household

The housing pattern of the polygynous village has disappeared, with its rows of women's houses (*menda*) ranged on each side of a central court (*nsəŋ*), with the men's meeting house (*aba'a*) at the head. However, the idea of marriage setting up a new unit, and the complementarity of the married couple, is still symbolized in the house. A married man should have a house of his own, with a reception room, sometimes still referred to as the *aba'a*, and a married women must have her own kitchen, now referred to by the pidgin word *kasin*. Usually these are two separate buildings of quite different style; the *aba'a* may be concreted and have a corrugated iron roof, while the *kasin* is generally unfinished earth, with a palm-frond roof. Although it looks dark and old-fashioned, the *kasin* construction has the advantage of allowing the thick smoke of cooking to escape. The *aba'a* is the man's sphere, where he receives guests, eats meals and sleeps. The *kasin* is the center of the woman's occupational and social life; she cooks there, stores her tools, seeds and harvested crops, receives visitors, often eats there with her children, may give birth to her children there and remain by the fire when sick, and generally only goes to the main house to be with and serve her husband's visitors and to sleep.

The group of people living in the *aba'a* and its kitchens, has no precise term to define it. The male owner of the *aba'a* is known as *mot nda*, the man of the house, a term which is analogous with the

mot dzal, man of the village, of the past. But the people who "depend" on him may include widows and their children who are not co-resident, as well as those living in his house. And there may be women living within his house plot whose kitchens have become their own homes for all purposes, and whose personal economies are separate from his. The jural unit represented by the male household head, and the group which was defined as the household for census purposes, namely those people who sleep in one *aba'a* and regularly eat from one or more kitchens, are not entirely isomorphic. Neither is the latter's boundary necessarily well-defined, since many old women have their own kitchens and fluctuate in the degree of their involvement in the life of the *aba'a*.

By this definition, however tricky certain individual cases are to categorize, the village census showed a mean household size almost identical to the findings of many other rural surveys since the 1950s. The population of the two villages was 979, 45 percent of whom were under sixteen, who lived in 184 households. There was a predominance of women in the adult population, 56 percent in one case and 59 percent in the other. The average household therefore consists of 5.3 people: 1.2 men and 1.7 women aged sixteen or over, and 2.4 children.

One must avoid reading into these figures two very misleading conclusions. First of all, the predominance of women does not mean that all adult men are married and living in a household with a woman present. In fact, it is striking that there is a significant proportion of unmarried men, some of whom live alone. In one village 40 percent of men sixteen and over were unmarried (29 percent under 30 and 11 percent over 30), and in the other 32 percent (18 percent under 30 and 14 percent over 30). On the other hand, relatively few of these men were living in households with no women in them. In one village, only 4 percent of households had no adult woman, and in the other 12 percent. Many of the unmarried men were attached to households with women in them, and these people account for the mean number of men per household exceeding one. In no case did two married men live in the same household with their wives.

Secondly, the higher number of women per household is not a result of polygynous marriage, but of the distribution of young single women and older widows among households already containing a married woman. Of those men who are married, in one village only 7 percent and in the other 13 percent were polygynously married, and none had more than two wives. Looked at from the perspective of household structure, polygyny accounted for a small proportion of two-woman households, while 47 percent of households contained two women.

The vast majority of women live in households with an adult man present. Of the currently unmarried women, including widows, 6 percent lived entirely alone, and a further 9 percent lived in households with no man of 16 or over. The latter were usually widows who either lived with their own minor children or had been sent a relative's child as company and help. Possibly as many as forty percent of households therefore contained two or more different relationships between the male household head and the resident adult women. Many of the other women are widowed mothers and unmarried adult daughters. Some are fathers' widows and unmarried sisters. The degree and kind of responsibility he has towards these women and

their children depends on both the formal aspects of the relationship and on the informal and personal arrangements among them all. Chapters 7 and 8 examine intra-familial exchange. The goods and services which women in different marital statuses require from, and contribute to, households depends on the basis they have for making a living. The following chapter analyzes the land, labor and dietary implications of the single most important source of rural women's support, the groundnut field.

Discussion

The "breakdown" of large descent units and the reconstruction of a "peasant" type of rural social structure has obviously occurred in Africa in the twentieth century. Numerous scholars have also noted the continuing importance of extended kin ties based on descent at certain phases of production cycles, in times of economic expansion (Berry 1975; Douglas 1969), and at all times for access to land (Clarke 1981; Schiltz 1983). These observations raise many questions about the direction of change in kinship and domestic structures, and the implications of the sequencing of piecemeal change in setting up new, and different, dynamics from the one suggested by Goody's typology (1976). In his formulation, the increased value of land is the fundamental condition for the emergence of the restricted family as a jural and economic unit. Since his theory is based on pre-industrial conditions, stratification and the state are considered as part of the unfolding consequences of land intensification. For modern Africa, state intervention is an initial condition, not a secondary one, for change in kinship relations.

A few observations can be made about this from Beti history. First of all, the intervention of the state in reshaping marriage and property rights has been considerably greater than an evolutionary theory can encompass. On the other hand, the intervention is neither complete nor a simple imposition of a European type of peasant law. "The legislation, precise on the definition of property and the status of persons, is, by contrast, quasi-silent on customary inheritance" (Weber 1974:38). Melone also noted the absence of provisions for inheritance in the 1966 family law, and explained it in terms of "pragmatism" (1972:180) in the face of the highly varied systems among Cameroonian ethnic groups and the potential for local resistance. In theory, the constitution implicitly grants inheritance rights to daughters because it states equality of the sexes as a general principle, but the whole institutional framework supporting marriage precludes this. A system of diverging devolution, in which women have rights in their natal household's property, rests on a much more elaborated legal code for defining inheritance rights in successive generations than has been attempted so far. It also implies the possibility of excluding some categories of people from the land, in an explicitly public, legal fashion, as opposed to allowing local exigencies and political structures to work themselves out through the shady areas and ambiguities of the law. The place of civil marriage in defining children's land rights could be one such shady area.

The principle of *mise en valeur* is another. While deriving from a development ideology, it meshes quite closely with the indigenous view that he who opens up the land has primary rights in it. Applied

to local concepts of inheritance, the same concept can be used to validate three different levels of rights, depending on the circumstances: the collective reversion rights of members of descent groups since their father opened up the land for initial cultivation, the individual rights of men who effectively started a new cycle when the land was inherited, and the use rights of women who cleared a particular plot for a particular season's cultivation. In other words, the principle does not unambiguously support individuation of land rights, except for land acquired by legal sale and matriculation or ceded by the state from the Patrimoine Nationale.

The question for Goody's kind of schema is whether the resultant maneuvering will lead to unambiguously individual or corporate household rights, and whether new forms of differentiation will be produced in the process. Rules which were consistent enough to generate corporate household structures would necessarily imply exclusionary principles, which at present seem most likely to apply to children not born into legal marriages. If such differentiation occurred, the position of these people in rural society would be quite problematic. It would certainly not be the kind of rural society envisaged by Meillassoux when he implies that all and sundry can be absorbed and reintegrated between spates of irregular employment in the formal sector (1981).

In the Lékié, the outcome is still uncertain. The changing demography of marriage, itself in part a response to legal change, and the improvement in the rights of married women, are steps along this kind of path. But if the rights of land access for unmarried women and their children are accommodated, any pressures towards occupational or class differentiation will develop more slowly. Either process could be validated by "tradition," depending on how highly land is valued: exclusion can be justified on the grounds that children of unmarried women are of inferior status with respect to valuable property, and accommodation can be defended on the grounds that land should be available for people who can claim a right to local residence. Neither direction would be indicative of changes in indigenous principles; it is a question of different types of property than in the past, a different framework of family law, and different implications for the development of a rural labor force.

Chapter 6:

THE BASIC FIELD PATTERN, SUBSISTENCE NEEDS, AND WORK

The field system which has developed turns out, on close examination, to be a remarkably efficient means for an individual woman to supply a culturally passable and nutritionally adequate diet. So far I have argued on the basis of historical data and circumstantial evidence, that the groundnut field constitutes an isolable element, or motif in the farming system. Here, I examine its viability in terms of resources and output, using data from the Departement de la Lékié in the mid-1970s. This chapter explores production in terms of the two constraints which set boundary limits on its organization: the subsistence needs which a woman has to cover, and the labor input which this requires.

The first part describes the basic field types, the rotation patterns and seasonality of work on each type, and their average sizes in the two village samples studied. The second section addresses the relationship between the field pattern and the food needs of a woman and her dependents. This exercise, fraught as it is with approximations, estimates, and data from different sources, has the value of establishing a lower limit of field size and farm organization for a woman who has the average number of dependents to feed. Anything over and above this should be an area of freedom and flexibility to invest labor in market-oriented activities.[1] The final section is devoted to the labor requirements of the basic fields, and their seasonal distribution, since the available labor is still the factor which sets limits on the kind of production for market which a woman can afford to develop without threatening her subsistence fields. The aim of these three sections is to show the major themes and areas of flexibility in the food farming system, and the ways in which the women of these two villages use them.

The Field System

The repertoire of field types is the same as it was a hundred years ago. People still use the same terminology of *esep* (*ekpak*), *afub owondo*, *asan*, and the other specific kinds of *mefub* (fields): *afub ɟon*, *bikɑn*, *bikɑdɑ*, *elɑbi*. The major differences from the past lie in (1) quantitative changes in frequency of cultivation, size, crop density, and the relative importance of different crops within each field type, (2) the qualitative alteration in yam cultivation, and a new innovation in tomatoes and other garden vegetables, (3) a

[1]The designation of this quantity as a "surplus" is not intended to imply that there is any rigid division between subsistence and the rest of production. The subsistence "bundle" can be altered, even in the short run, if a woman has to increase her cash income. However, the fact that the cocoa belt is, on the whole, adequately fed, lends some legitimacy to considering marketed food as "surplus," and most women do now explicitly orient part of their production to the market.

shift in the definition of the content and ownership of *esep*, where it is still cultivated. For the classic patterns, the reader is referred back to Chapter 2; here, I outline only the major changes.

Esep

In the old system *esep* may not have been cultivated every year, but it had to be grown often enough to keep stores adequate for feasting and to preserve the seed. It had a symbolic as well as material/productive importance in the old system. A young man proved himself by cutting a new forest field and could use its produce to begin accumulation. A headman had to be able to serve *nnam ngǫn* (a melon-seed dish) to his guests and could use melon-seeds in the exchange and bridewealth system. In a humid climate, where storage always carries risks of loss, it seems quite unlikely that a man opened up *esep* less often than every other year.

Esep is still cultivated, but with several critical changes. It is cultivated far less frequently than can possibly have been the case in the past. Of the 83 women farmers interviewed on their repertoire of fields, only 11 had an *esep* field. Fewer women have access to male labor for clearing, so that many of them, when asked whether they had an *esep* field, simply replied "I have no husband," as if that made it self-explanatory; 9 of the 11 were married women with resident husbands. In all cases, the fields had been cleared by men, in one case at the considerable expense of calling of a work party. In these villages, then, *esep* was still considered to require male labor and investment at the beginning of the cycle. *Esep* is also cultivated by some adult men with no wives, daughters or mothers to feed them, but in this area, such a person generally grows plantain, cocoyam, and maize, that is, a non-classic rotation for *esep*, adjusted to do without female labor and also integrate with the demands of cocoa. The frequency of cultivation must also reflect the availability of seed, now that the whole field-type is in decline. Melon-seed is expensive to purchase. Finally, in many areas there is simply not enough forest fallow land left to work *esep* fields on a regular basis.[2]

Even when a man and his wife do cultivate *esep*, it no longer follows classic patterns. Once the clearing is completed, there is little or no male labor input in the villages studied. Women alone manage the cultivation, and female work parties do all the harvesting. The woman whose field it is then gives her workers a portion of the harvest, and there is no male intervention into the distribution at this point. Many women also assimilate *esep* to their own roster of fields when they talk about farming, unlike the occasional food field which their husbands work. With monogamous marriage, there is no division of the harvest to be made among co-wives.

Associated with the gradual feminization of *esep*, where it is still worked, there appears to be a shift in cultivation patterns. Like the single man's *esep*, some of the fields described as *esep* contain no melon-seeds at all. They are planted with cocoyam, plantain, and sometimes even cassava, which was never, people insist,

[2]During visits to Bene areas south of Yaoundé where the population density is lower and the communications with Yaoundé poorer, I found more *esep* production than in the Lekie. Mutsaers et al., also found this pattern, but thought it to be in decline (1977:9).

grown in *esep* in the past. This is probably related to the intensification of the groundnut field, to be described below. If groundnuts are grown in both rainy seasons, then the melon-seed harvest conflicts not only with the cocoa harvest, which women generally participate in, but also with the second season groundnut harvest. Cassava is unambiguously a women's crop, so its invasion into *esep* in a few cases represents a change in the cultural associations of *esep* with male labor and male control.

Esep is probably considerably smaller, per female worker, than it was in the past. This is particularly difficult to judge, because old people traced out huge areas as the collective village *esep* of their fathers. Whereas half a hectare is mentioned as an individual's field for earlier periods, the five *esep* fields measured in the Lékié averaged only .30 hectares.

To summarize, the classic *esep* is still part of the farming repertoire, but it is cultivated infrequently, mainly by married women and some men, and its size and cropping pattern reflects a diminution of joint labor and a reduction in the melon-seed component. One should note, briefly, that this process of change has so far been progressive, but *esep*, in various possible forms, is a field type which could still be expanded if the price of melon-seeds rose, suitable land were available, and the distribution of labor and product could be negotiated between men and women.

Afub Owondo: groundnut field

The groundnut field is almost exclusively cultivated by women, using their traditional hoe. Only the initial clearing of the bush is done by men, and many women cultivate their groundnut fields without any male help at all. Since it is grown on land which in some cases has been under fallow for as little as three years, it is entirely feasible to clear the bush with a machete (*fa*), rather than an axe (*ovon*). All the rest of the work is done with hoe and machete, and the short-handled hoe is still an exclusively female tool.

Parenthetically, and just to emphasize the possibilities for idiosyncracy in a segmentary population where the men place positive value on individualism, I did interview two adult men who farmed with a hoe. One of them initially claimed that he was "modern" in cultivating his own groundnut plot. However, he had recently been deserted by his wife, and, judging by the poor care his plot received, it seemed less enterprising than he claimed. The other was helping his wife, the mother of ten children, who was in poor health. When asked why he was hoeing, unlike other men, he gave a classic Beti answer, to the effect that he neither knew nor cared what everyone else did. His wife was tired (*ntegan*) and they needed the groundnut field. The latter case suggests a distinction which one needs to be careful to make in generalizing about inter-personal relations, namely the distinction between structurally determined conditions, and personal relations. There is no doubt that Beti philosophy sets the sexes in opposition to one another. But at the personal level, some men, in some situations, act with great generosity. Hoeing a wife's field goes beyond the standard call of duty, as does spending a whole Sunday to take money to an elderly and neglected young widow of one's long-dead, highly polygynous father.

The monopoly of hoe cultivation by women remains the general rule. The major changes in groundnut farming involve the frequency

of cultivation, the size of fields, and the intensity of intercropping.

In the past, the groundnut field was often planted in the first rainly season only (*asil*). Recent study of the yields suggests that it does better in this March-July period than in September-December, possibly because the second season is considerably wetter, with less hours of sunshine (Van Gils 1976). In technical terms, growing a large field in the first rainy season makes more efficient use of labor in most places than growing two smaller fields, one in each season (*asil* and *akap*). Also, the dry deason in August (*oyon*) is very short for field preparation and firing, unlike the long dry season in December through March. When *esep* was still important, this cultivation pattern left the second season free for the melon-seed harvest, drying, and storage.

Some older people mentioned that when they did plant a second-season field in the past, it was small, and one of its main functions was to ensure a supply of seed for the first-season field of the following year, that is, to mitigate the problems of storage of the seed through the main rainy season (September to November). The second-season harvest is easier to dry and store, because the subsequent dry season (December to March) is two to three months long.

At present, almost every woman grows a new groundnut field in both rainy seasons. There are only two exceptions to this. The first is regional. Manguissa women still plant one very large first-season field, with a greater variety of crops than the women further south. They also continue to cultivate on large mounds (*mebom*) and long beds (*kala*), a practice which is only possible with fine alluvial soil. Occasionally, women in other regions with savanna conditions also grew large first season farms, but not as a general rule. Elsewhere, the only reasons a woman might skip a season would be due to pregnancy or illness, or an unmarried woman may decide to rely on her mother for a while. Otherwise, every woman works two seasons.

At the same time, women say that fields are, if anything, larger than they were in the past. Older women pointed out how small their own fields had been when they were young wives, but this information is very difficult to assess, as is their insistence that the land was much more fertile and the yields higher. They may be right, but it would be difficult to place confidence in any precise estimates. In any case, the fact that two fields a year is now standard, almost certainly means that the groundnut field accounts for larger areas than in the past. In one village, the fields of both seasons had the same mean size, giving a mean annual groundnut plot size of .20 hectares. In the other, the first-season field was considerably larger than the second-season, and together the mean area per woman was .27 hectares. Table 5 summarizes field sizes.

Table 5:
Mean Size, Groundnut Fields, Two Villages

	Mean Size (ha.)	N
Nkolfeb		
1st season	.10	26
2nd season	.10	18
Total (p.a.)	.20	44
Nkometou		
1st season	.16	51
2nd season	.11	10
Total (p.a.)	.27	61

Finally, there is some circumstantial evidence that crop density has been increased in the groundnut plot. A report for the 1950s suggests that in areas where groundnuts were grown on heaps, there was an active campaign to get women to grow them on the flat, both to increase production per unit area, and to reduce the weeding and the pest problem (C.N.A. Saa). It is difficult to imagine that groundnuts could be grown any closer together than they are now without making it impossible to work in the field without trampling on them. Even if groundnuts themselves have changed little in cultivation technique, it is almost certain that the intercropping of cassava has been greatly increased. Cassava is the basic dietary staple to a greater degree now than in the past, and it is always grown on the groundnut field. Many women plant varieties which are processed for market sale, as well as the sweet varieties, cooked for home consumption without prior treatment.

As noted earlier, the groundnut field can provide a diet which is not far from nutritional adequacy, and contains at least some of the prestige ingredients. It is supplemented by palm nuts, which grow more or less wild. Groundnuts constitute not only a nutritious ingredient which is eaten in almost every sauce, but they are still highly valued. A woman's groundnut harvest is still a measure, to herself and others, of the productivity of her farm, and it is still made into *nnam owondo* for visitors and special occasions. During the first season of cultivation, the field produces maize and various leaves and vegetables for sauces (*zom, okra*), as well as groundnuts. In the second season there is maize again, vegetables, and the fresh leaves of the growing cassava (*kpem*), which are cut finely into a groundnut or palmnut sauce and eaten several times a week by all rural families. Starting after the second maize crop is removed, certain kinds of cassava can begin to be harvested, along with the yams and cocoyams which provide the carbohydrate of the diet. Eventually the field is left in cassava and plantain, again, major staples. This field has therefore been elaborated, extended, and intensified to provide the basic diet without the complementarity with *esep*.

Afub Bikɔdɔ: yam field

The Lékié was a major yam-producing area in the past. Older women claim that the yam field was often larger than their groundnut field. In the mid-1970s, I saw only one large yam field, planted by an old woman of enormous vigor. A man and his wife had grown another smaller plot behind their house. Otherwise, all yams were grown either in a corner of the woman's groundnut field, or at intervals throughout it. *Kpɛ̱dɛ̱* has entirely disappeared. Manguissa farmers attributed this to several related causes: the takeover of *esep* (*ekpak*) by cocoa, the decline in polygyny which facilitated the mobilization of female labor for heaping and weeding, and the unwillingness of men to put work into staking, tending, harvesting, and storage. To an even greater degree than melon-seeds, yam cultivation suffers badly, as it declines, from problems of keeping a constant supply of planting material available within the village. Below a certain level, this may be a major factor in its rapid demise. There are no current sources of seed-yams for *kpɛ̱dɛ̱*. I never saw a yam storage hut, and have the strong impressions that yams are eaten or sold in the immediate post-harvest period.

Yams are now a very subordinate theme in the food system, but again, like melon-seeds, the knowledge and organizational guidelines still exist, and could probably be reworked if market conditions made it an attractive proposition.

Minor Fields

"Minor fields" are minor in two senses: not everyone necessarily works them every year, and they are usually smaller than the groundnut field. They are optional; when asked whether she planned to grow a particular type of minor field, a woman often answered "if I have the strength." It is the rare woman who works all these fields in any one year, because the workload would be heavy and inflexible. Most minor fields are cleared by the women themselves, and they do all the cultivation work. Often they are grown for one crop only and then abandoned, rather than intercropped to last more than one season.

Afub mebuda: sweet potato field

This is worked in May in a brief respite from the groundnut field, and harvested from July onwards. Sweet potatoes are grown from vine cuttings, which are freely given from one woman to another, so access to planting material is not a problem. One advantage to the sweet potato field is that July to September can be a time of mild shortage of cassava, if the previous year's first-season field has been used up from January through July. Maize, early cutting of yam and sweet potato can tide over the short period until the second-season cassava is ready in September. However, shortage of cassava is a rare occurrence. Sweet potatoes simply give increased variety to the diet or provide something to sell.

Afub fɔn (Mbas in Eton): maize field

Unlike the intercropping of maize in the groundnut field, this field is monocropped and then left to return to bush. There are two kinds. One is worked by men, as a contribution to the family food, and planted in March and April when the women are completely absorbed in their groundnut fields. The other is planted by women in

marshy areas, before the March rains, to give an early harvest when fresh maize can command a high price in the market.

Afub mebangan: cocoyam field

In the village closer to the savanna, women planted cocoyam plots at the beginning of the heavy rains in September, as well as having a few stands in the groundnut field. In the forest, more cocoyams are grown in the major fields.

Afub elọbi: a river field

This field was traditionally worked in wet land in the December-March dry season as a source of green vegetables. It is sometimes referred to as *asan*, a term whose meaning is somewhat varied by region, but in general indicates any dry season, monocropped field. The term *asan* is usually simply an alternative to *elọbi* in the present system, although it was used in the past to indicate the forced rice plots of the colonial era.

Where there is a market for greens, *bilobi* are increasingly common. They are very labor-intensive, because the necessary irrigation is done by bucket. However, the heaviest work comes in a season when a woman has fewer agricultural tasks to do, providing that she can count on help with the clearing of her first-season groundnut field. It is here that the main effect of men's clearing labor on total production can be seen, because a large *elọbi* is out of the question for a woman with no access to labor labor for clearing her groundnut plot. It can be quite lucrative; one woman made 38,000 CFA (about $150) from the leaf vegetables in her *elọbi* in 1975.

Men's Food Crops

Besides *esep*, there are several small fields and individual crops through which men may contribute to the food supply. All are optional, individual and erratic, but may be quite important in particular cases. They also illustrate the fact the the food/cocoa division is a convenient rough distinction for summarizing the division of labor but is not its conceptual basis. All tree crops belong to men. This includes avocadoes, mangoes, oranges, grapefruit, a sour fruit known as *saa*, and palms. Men do not cultivate entire groves of fruit trees, but they may own a few of several different kinds, which yield both food and a seasonal cash income. Women cut the palm fruit from their husbands' or guardians' trees for cooking, and the men may tap the palms for wine.

Most men also keep a small plot of plantain, equivalent to the *falag bikọn*, the plantain behind the village, of the past. In many villages the groves behind the houses are now in cocoa, but men keep some plantain elsewhere on their land. Plantain is a food crop which has received a great deal of official encouragement, once in the late-1940s and again in the mid-1970s. With the decline in yam production, plantain is the only major starch staple which men will produce for the market. The effort has been of very patchy success, partly because of low prices and the difficult problem of transport for such a bulky and highly perishable crop.

Finally, some men grow monocropped maize fields from time to time. The relative lack of barriers to men working monocropped

fields which can be cultivated without the women's hoe, has been a factor in the enormous success of certain men at market-gardening of tomatoes in a few areas on main roads. This crop is entirely destined for the urban market.

It is difficult to generalize about men's contributions in kind to the food supply system because of its optative nature. It may be a lot more than minimal, but it is not predictable. Except for tomato-farming and a few men's plantain plots, men's fields are part of the flexibility and variety in the system, not part of its core elements.

Field Associations

The pattern of field types cultivated in association differs from woman to woman, and even for the same woman from year to year. An old woman, in failing strength, spreads her work over two similar size groundnut fields in March and September and does nothing else. A young woman who expects to deliver a baby in September may work a larger than usual first-season field and a sweet potato plot, then not work a new plot in the second-season but pick up again with a small river plot (*elǫbi*) in December. A woman with heavy family responsibilities but limited help may work a large first season field, a second-season field, and a small *esep* or cocoyam plot every other year to keep up a staple food supply. She would also make sure that her groundnut fields were well interplanted with plantain so that they would still be yielding well into the third year. She would be unlikely to work a river field because the work requirements would overlap with the greater priority of clearing her new first season field in January and February. Only a woman who has the unstinted help of her husband to clear her new fields twice a year, and perhaps contribute plantain or maize from his own monocropped plots, and who is in the peak working years can manage the whole range.

Farm Sizes

A farm must be seen as a composite of different field types and different types of fallow land. Without a specification of field type and cropping pattern, the size of a farm is no indication of total production. Larger areas under cultivation generally indicate less intensive methods. In the literature on Southern Cameroonian agriculture, it is often made clear that plots in excess of .35 hectares have a set of characteristics very similar to the *esep* field: they require male labor, long fallow land, and are less intensively cultivated (Dugast 1944:22). Of the Bassa men's maize fields, Champaud writes "the weakness of the yield is compensated by the area put under cultivation" (1973:30). Discussion of size must always be combined with attention to patterns of cropping.

These farming systems contain sets of possibilities between two ideal type extremes, and can tend in one direction or the other, depending on the conditions. As Boserup suggests, major leaps can be made in the intensification of cultivation, without going through all the gradations in between (1965). In the Beti system as presently practiced, there are two technical equilibrium points: a long fallow cycle, with at least fifteen years of fallow, with *esep* as

the crucial field type, and a short cycle, which can go as low as two years cultivation to three years fallow, based on the groundnut field. Any intensification beyond this point could only be based on elaboration of *elɔbi/asan* (river-field) type of cultivation which, on any large scale, would require irrigation. Some men are doing this for tomato cultivation, and some women for green vegetables, but it is quite infeasible at present to do it for the dietary staples. Also, there is no valued vegetable protein component to any of the river-field cycles, so that preservation of the diet would be problematic under any conditions which shifted emphasis away from not just one, but both, of the traditional main fields.

The sizes of each field type do not vary much within each of the villages studied. Each field type seems to have its limits. The first-season groundnut field of the majority of full-time farmers falls in the range of .08-.14 hectares in Nkolfeb and .13-.18 hectares in Nkometou. The average second-season field is the same size in both villages, about .10 hectares. This gives an average total of groundnut fields of .20-.25 hectares per woman per year, with a range of less than .10 to over .30.

The average size of *esep* fields is .30 hectares, although this is based on only five measurements. This corresponds closely to the women's estimates that an *esep* field is about three times as large as a groundnut field. The range is wide, almost exclusively due to men's contribution to the clearing. A married woman's *esep* could be up in the range of .50 hectares, while the two unmarried women who had *esep* plots worked .25 hectares or less.

All the minor fields show a remarkable similarity in size, at around .03 hectares. Again, there is the occasional woman who works a much larger area, either because she has not worked the second season that year, or because her husband does most of the clearing.

The present pattern of cultivation for a full-time farmer in the villages studied was therefore .20-.25 hectares per year of groundnut fields, plus about .10 extra hectares per year of other crops. In Nkolfeb, the extra is still accounted for in part by intermittent *esep* cultivation, in Nkometou it is accounted for by specialty fields. This would give an approximate area under cultivation at any one time of .60-.70 hectares, of which the women consider .30-.40 hectares to be the absolute minimum to feed the average number of three dependents and oneself.

In summary, the basic plan of farming is still oriented to covering the diet, in that the greatest priority is placed on those fields whose cropping patterns meet culturally adequate nutrition standards for all the major dietary components. This does not preclude the orientation of some fields, certain crops, and certain levels of production explicitly towards the market, but it does mean that food needs still structure the cropping system and set the bottom line with respect to farm size.

Food Needs and Production

Any attempt to match consumption with farm size and cropping patterns has to be approximate. A variety of sources are used: data from nutrition studies on the quantities required or customarily consumed, and estimates of yields from my own and other survey data. For simplicity, I have limited the estimates to two staples, cassava

and cocoyams, and groundnuts, because they have been the most important components of the diet for at least ten years, and as long as they are being produced, there will be no problem with the supply of leaves, peppers and other sauce ingredients.[3] Table 6 summarizes the estimates of subsistence needs, yields, and margins; these are the main grounds for concluding that the current field system does provide enough of the two basic dietary elements, starch staple and groundnuts, to meet annual consumption needs. Table 7 sets out the basis for the estimates in Table 6; it is extensive and concludes with discussions of the different sources used.

(Text resumes on page 96).

[3]Plantain is the most important staple omitted by this method. In the Bulu area to the south, plantain is consumed more than cassava, while in the Beti areas it accounts for up to three quarters as much staple food, by weight, as cassava. In terms of calories, cassava is the largest single item, providing 24 percent of daily calories in the cocoa zone as a whole, plantain provides 15 percent, and groundnuts 14 percent (SEDES 1964/5:42).

Table 6:
Food Needs, Yields and Margins

Minimum subsistence, per annum, 4 people (weight includes inedible parts)

Crop	Kgs.
Groundnuts	150
Staple: cassava	1,500
cocoyam	700

Yields on .20 ha of groundnut field (2,000 stands of staple)

Crop	Kgs.
Groundnuts	220
Staple: cassava	3,000
cocoyam	1,000

Total surplus over minimum subsistence

Crop	Kgs.
Groundnuts	70
Staple: cassava	1,500
cocoyam	300

Women's approximation of "normal surplus" over the minimum, based on estimates of farm size, is 50 percent of minimum.

Crop	Subsistence plus normal surplus (kg)	Yields (kg)	Marketable surplus (kg)
Groundnuts	220	220	0
Staple: cassava	2,250	3,000	750
cocoyam	1,050	1,000	-50

Conclusion: .20 hectares of groundnut field per annum (total farm size of .40 hectares), can cover minimum subsistence and a normal surplus, with a marketable surplus of 17 percent of total staple production, or the equivalent of .03 hectares of field area per annum.

Table 7: Sources of Estimates

Subsistence Needs, Four-person group.

a: Groundnuts:

50 g. per person per day of shelled seed (SEDES 1964/5:47)
= 73 kg. shelled seed p.a.

Shelled seed = 65 percent weight of field harvest (Platt 1962)
= 110 kg. unshelled seed.

Planting needs = 1/4 - 1/3 yield (farmers' own estimates; see also Phillips 1966: 40-41)
= 27-37 kg.

Total subsistence needs
= 137-147 kg. p.a., rounded to 150 kg p.a.

Discussion: Masseyeff, writing on a village in the Lékié, (1958: 38) gives lower figures for per capita groundnut consumption (33.4 g. per person per day) but this is so far below the SEDES average for the whole zone that I took the SEDES figure for Obala (41 g. groundnuts and 6 g. melonseed) rounded to 50 g.

b: Staples

1 kg. per person per day (SEDES 1964/5:47; Masseyeff 1958:38)
= 1,460 kg. per year, prepared food.

Assuming tubers only, prepared food is 80 percent weight from the field (Platt)
= 1,825 kg. harvested crop.

A certain amount above this is used per day for animal food, or as waste because of the small size of the tubers. Assume 1 kg. per family per day in "waste"
= 2,160 kg, rounded to 2,200 kg. p.a.

Diet

The 1964 study of the standard of living in the cocoa zone showed the dietary staples as: 45 percent plantain, 45 percent cassava, 10 percent other tubers.

For Obala, it broke down, by weight, as follows:

	G. per person per day		Percent	
Cereals	23		2	
Tubers:	604		60	
cassava		422		42
cocoyam		94		9
other		88		9
Plantain	389		38	
Total	1,016		100	

Sources: SEDES 1964/5:47.

Since then, cassava has become the major staple of the areas I know in the Lékié. For the purposes of estimation, I assume that cassava accounts for 2/3 of the total weight of staples, and the other 1/3 is calculated as if it were cocoyam. This assumption tends to understate the area needed for subsistence because of the greater yield of cassava per unit area. It also tends to understate the intermittent importance of the plantain which is not grown in women's fields, i.e. the plots of plantain which men sometimes grow, both for food and for market.

Yields: a field of .10 hectares, twice per year.

a.Groundnuts:

1. The women themselves estimate 2 - 3 sacks.
   One sack = 35-40 kg.
   = 80-120 kg. per field.

2. Figures from ENSA: 118 kg. per 1st season field
   72 kg. per 2nd season field

Estimate = 160-240 kg. p.a.

b. Staples:

Cassava

1. Weighings at Nkometou 1976, each weighing averaged over 3 stands.
   Highest value per stand: 4.6 kg.
   Lowest value per stand weighed: 2.0 kg.
   Lowest ever seen: zero, due to parasites

   Assume 3 kg. per stand, stands of 1 square meter per staple, half of which are cassava = 1,500 kg. per field,
   Estimate = 3,000 kg. p.a.

2. Weighings at Yemessoa (ENSA)
   Average per stand: 1.7 kg.
   With above assumptions
   Estimate = 1,700 kg. p.a.

Discussion: The yields of cassava are a very fraught problem because they are often reported without any attention to crop density or the length of time the crop is left in the ground. The official figures on cassava yields for the Lékié, as reported in N'Sangou (1973:110) are 6,453 kg. per hectare. My own weighings and assumptions would give per hectare yields of 15,000 kg., which is within the range quoted for Nigeria by Phillips, namely 12,500 - 25,000 kg. per hectare in traditional cultivation (1964:14). The ENSA figures would give per hectare yields of 8,500 kg; they come from a particularly high population density area, and one with an increasing parasite problem (*kamsi*). It seems to me very unlikely that the soil in the Lékié is so poor as to yield only 6,453 kg. per hectare when the reported yields for yams are just under 10,000; according to Phillips, yams generally produce at 1/2 to 2/3 the weight per unit area as cassava. Mutsaers et al have criticized my own figures

and revised them downward (1978), although I have seen much higher yields in southern villages than in any village in the Lékié. Here we have a need for precise year to year figures, under many different conditions of climate, soil, and parasites. In their absence, I use my own estimates.

Cocoyam

1. Weighings at Nkometou
   Highest value per stand: 1.4 kg.
   Lowest value per stand: 0.8 kg.

2. Women's estimates: 2 stands of cassava = 6 stands cocoyam

Assume 1 kg. per stand, stands of 1 square meter, half of which are cocoyam
= 500 kg. per field
= 1,000 kg. per year

Other staples:
Yields were not measured accurately.

1. Plantain: planted irregularly in the groundnut field, the highest density seen was on stands of 9 square meters, giving about 110 per field. Many fields had none at all.

2. Yams and Sweet Potatoes: harvested more than once from the same stand. Phillips's data suggests that they produce within the same range per unit area as cocoyams. This would give a yield of approximately 150 kg. per .03 ha. field. If both fields are worked, this gives additional staples of 300 kg. p.a.

3. Maize: Production in the groundnut fields depends on crop density. Phillips's estimates would give 100 kg. per .10 ha. field. Figures in N'Sangou give 68 kg. per field.
   = approximately 140 kg. p.a.

Summary:
Two .10 ha. fields can therefore produce:
160-240 kg. groundnuts
3,000 kg. cassava, or more, depending on crop density.
1,000 kg. cocoyams
140 kg. maize
Plantain

Two .03 ha. yam and sweet potato fields produce:
300 kg. tubers.

Discussion: The standard .20 ha. p.a. of groundnut field just covers the family needs for consumption, seed, and a normal margin or surplus for the groundnuts themselves. There is nothing left to sell from a farm this size. In fact, the Lékié now imports some groundnuts, from the North for eating, and from other areas close by for planting. The same field gives a small margin above subsistence for the staples, about 17 percent of total production. In a good year, a higher proportion may be sold.

The four people who depend on the average woman for their subsistence can be adequately fed the whole range of basic dietary staples from .20 hectares of groundnut field per year, but it leaves little room for manoeuvre. Women whose fields are this small may always be able to find something to sell - peppers, some cassava, a few okra - but one can assume, and they say themselves, that their farms are not oriented to the market.

Labor Requirements

The last section suggested that the minimum farm is determined by subsistence needs, and remains the central pivot of the food system. This section explores the amount and distribution of the labor input used by the basic farm.

The "average workload" is a misleading concept in the context of family farming because the speed, strength, and application which people bring to work is so varied. An old woman can put more time into her small farm than a young woman on her large one. The approximations used here are those which the women themselves quoted as the length of time they expected to spend, or allowed for, on various standard tasks. The working day in the field is about 6-7 hours for a woman, half of her total workday on the days she goes to farm. All other work is fitted into this schedule: daily harvesting and cooking, cutting and carrying wood, fetching water, washing dishes and clothes, house-cleaning, marketing, and child care.

There are three periods of work pressure on a groundnut field: February to April for clearing, preparing the ground and planting, late May to June for weeding, and late June to July for harvesting. The same pattern is repeated for the second-season field, beginning almost as soon as the first-season harvest is finished, in early August.

Before turning to the absolute amounts of work required, it is important to note that none of these pressure periods is a real bottleneck. Each process takes fifteen or more work days. The field is planted over a two to three week period, so that the crops are at sequential stages of growth. This means that each successive procedure follows the same rhythm, and finds the plants at the same stage of maturation. At no time is it an absolute necessity that a woman mobilize a work party to get over a bottleneck. This pattern is a reflection of women's limited ability to mobilize labor. Women may work together for company, but since every woman has her own field, this cannot mitigate work bottlenecks unless people's fields are on a different schedule. Only if she can get children or urban relatives to help at certain times can a woman draw outside labor onto her farm, but this is not dependable. The smoothing of labor requirements avoids all such possible bottlenecks, and constitutes, in my own view, one of the characteristics of women's farming as it has developed in the twentieth century (Guyer 1984).

Times budgeted for a standard groundnut field are presented in Table 8.

Table 8:
Labor Times, Per Season, Groundnut Field (.10 ha.)

	Days
Clearing	15
Burning, cleaning	5-10
Hoeing, planting	15-20
Weeding	15
Weeding previous plot	15
Harvest, plucking, drying	20
Total	85-95

Days per year: 170-190

Total days available for farming: 240

Margin: 50-70 days per year.

Source: Estimated on the basis of statements about the number of weeks in each activity, assuming a five-day work week.

The workload for feeding the family is therefore about 2/3 to 3/4 of the time available for farming. If social obligations, housework, marketing, and sickness take up about one-third of all days per year, then the hypothetical "average" woman has about 50-70 days left to devote to activities other than feeding the family.

The timing of the pressure periods, however, makes it difficult for women to invest more than a small proportion of this extra time in groundnut fields. Hoeing and planting has to be started after the beginning of the rains in March, because the ground needs to be softened up, but it cannot be continued beyond the beginning or middle of May because of the difficulty of harvesting late groundnuts in the dry soil of late July and August. If the harvesting drags on into August, the time left to clear and fire the *akap* field before the beginning of the September rains may be too short. A woman has approximately six weeks, or 30 working days, from mid-March to the end of April to hoe and plant, if she is to get all her harvest in by the end of July, so that .20 hectares would seem to be the outside limit on field size. This would give a heavy harvest season, and a second-season field could only be prepared if a man did the clearing. For the first-season field, the fact that a man does the clearing, frees his wife up to make a river-field, but it cannot mitigate the constraints on hoeing, weeding, and harvesting because these remain women's work. Once the limit of groundnut field size is reached, expansion of the total farm has to be achieved through fields on a different timing system, that is *esep* or the minor plots.

The two villages studied differ in their modes of expansion. The women of Nkolfeb still have some *esep* fields and cultivate more specialty cocoyam and plantain plots, but keep their groundnut plots within the subsistence range. The crops from these fields are more suited to a village which is off the main road, and has uncertain transport to the market because they all tend to keep fairly well, at least for a few days. The women of Nkometou have considerably

larger groundnut fields, probably close to the limit under the present system of work. They also give more time to river-fields, and the production of highly perishable specialty crops, such as leaf greens. River-fields have become very important as sources of cash during the three to four years before the study. This related to their much better transport situation, on the major main road into Yaoundé. They not only sell to the market, but can often sell to passing vehicles at the side of the road. They prepare cassava flour in quite large quantities from their extra-large groundnut fields, and benefit from the ease of transport for marketing it during the heavy rains between September and November, when other villages are more or less cut off.

In summary, food requirements are covered in both villages. People may complain, as they do, that the diet is much poorer than it used to be, which is surely the case. But it is, technically, a livable diet, at least as long as current yields can be maintained.[4] There is always a small margin over subsistence which may be marketed, depending on the technical and personal unpredictables: yield, state of health, number of visitors, social obligations, etc. But it is not planned for the market. Expansion above the level of "surpluses" from the groundnut field is possible, but is achieved within the limits of labor availability particular to women, who do not have the means to mobilize additional labor to cope with true work bottlenecks at present. Expansion is characterized by a preservation of the subsistence pattern of the groundnut field; women express neither the desire, nor the realistic possibility of abandoning the diet to the market in order to specialize production along other lines. Greater risks are taken and experimentation carried out in the monocropped specialty fields, where much less is at stake in case of failure.

Marriage and the Field System

It remains to explore whether, and why, productive patterns may differ between married and unmarried women. Taking the 77 first-season groundnut fields and 28 second-season fields measured, the following distribution emerges (Table 9):

Table 9:
Groundnut Field, Per Woman, By Marital Status, in Hectares.

Marital status	First Season		Second Season	
	Mean size	N	Mean size	N
Married	.15	55	.13	17
Single	.09	4	.07	7
Separated	.14	3	-	-
Widowed	.15	15	.11	4
Total	.14	77	.11	28

[4]According to the National Nutrition Survey (1978), devoted to the nutritional status of children under five, the Central-South Province (excluding the city of Yaoundé) had the lowest level of chronic undernutrition in the country: 18.8 percent, compared to the countrywide mean of 22.1 percent (1978:87). The definition of undernutrition was in terms of height for age: "A child measuring less than 90 percent of his expected height-for-age will be classified as chronically undernourished" (1978:51-2).

With respect to field size, there are virtually no differences among women in the fully adult age categories. The smaller size of field for single women is entirely consonant with the expectation that these are young women, still partially incorporated into their mothers' enterprises. The currently unmarried women also had fewer dependents. In the small sample, married women had a mean number of 2.7 dependent and co-resident children, while the unmarried had only 1.1

The differences which do exist rest more in the range of field associations than in the field sizes per se. Married women are more likely to have *esep* plots where these are still cultivated, and they can add specialty fields without necessarily cutting down on the size of their groundnut plots.

Work records for the small sample follows a similar pattern (Table 10).

Table 10:
Percentage Days per Woman, By Activity, By Marital Status
(26 women, July and November, 56 days)

Marital status		Own fields	Other agric.	Market	Social/ Rest	Sick	Total
Married	(n=17)	50	4	11	23	12	100
Single	(n=4)	35	7	111	33	11	100
Separated	(n=2)	39	9	12	27	13	100
Widowed	(n=3)	63	2	4	26	5	100

Married and widowed women spend considerably more days in their own fields than single and separated women, 50 percent and 63 percent respectively by comparison with 35 percent and 39 percent. Single women take more social and leisure time, 33 percent compared with married women's 23 percent, and they also spend somewhat more time in income-earning activities other than their own farms. The differences, however, are not startingly wide, and do not indicate completely different patterns of activity.

Discussion

The groundnut rotation must be seen, not as an element of cultural persistence alone, but as a technically and socially dependable means for a woman to exert some control over the short-run conditions of making a livelihood. As long as yields do not decline, the groundnut field is a subsistence masterpiece; it is varied in products, complementary in their quantities and manageable in terms of work requirements under a range of conditions of resource availability, both general and personal. Its viability as an individuated enterprise has given it the quality of a motif, to use a musical analogy; it is an element which has its own form and coherence, but which can be structurally contextualized in several different ways. The points of articulation with local and government control are governed by a powerful, but vague, ideology. The particular terms of that control can shift. They have been shifting form some time, but in ways which do not profoundly differentiate the current productive

capacity of different categories of women. The point of articulation at the beginning of the cultivation cycle, namely land access, has been discussed in Chapter 5, and shown to be neither stringent nor strategic enough yet to drive the women's farming system into a general decline or a progressively differentiating pattern, or even into a situation where it is easily manipulable through policy measures. The following chapter discusses the point of articulation at the end, namely control and use of the goods produced by men's and women's work and of the cash income earned.

Chapter 7:

INCOME, EXPENDITURE, AND DIFFERENTIATION

The cultural definition of the sexual division of labor by tool and task has changed very little over the past hundred years, but the organization of work is now specialized by field-type. Both male and female cycles in the farming system now earn a cash income, a situation which poses challenges to the cultural and social framework for distributing the product. So far women have not questioned their duty to farm for the family diet rather than develop an exclusively market orientation. Their husbands and children have a right to be fed from their fields, no matter how much or how little they contribute in work or in cash. The payment of bridewealth and male ownership of land legitimates this right, and women identify with family provisioning as a major goal in life. The control of cash is a different matter.

Income and Expenditure

The present system of income control and responsibility for expenditures within families has developed within the context of the marked change in income sources over the past twenty years. By 1964 cocoa accounted for only 83 percent as much cash income per household as it had ten years earlier (Winter 1970:167). By contrast, "other agricultural products" accounted for almost seven times the amounts they earned in the mid-1950s. The ratio of cocoa to "other agricultural products" in the average household budget went from 35:1 (Binet 1956:57) to 4:1. By the early 1970s, Weber suggested that the gap had narrowed to approximately 3:1 (1974:19-21). During my own field research cocoa prices were rising again, and the difference was redressed, but the category designated as "other agricultural products" was still, and will certainly remain, a major source of income in villages in the hinterland of Yaoundé.

Before exploring the implications of these changes for the distribution of income, expenditure, and responsibilities, some indications will be given of the sources, amounts, and timing of income for men and women as a baseline. Where payment is made in kind rather than cash, the terms of payment are discussed. The figures used are taken from several sources, and therefore require some explicit interpretation in the course of the exposition.

Men's Incomes[1]

Cocoa is still the major source of income for men. The accountbooks of the cocoa cooperative are used to calculate the general level of cocoa incomes and their fluctuations. As an indicator of the cash which men control, these figures have several problems:

[1]Men's incomes and expenditure, and differentiation among men is examined, the sources critiqued, and examples given in more detail in Appendix D.

they reflect gross cocoa income rather than net earnings, not all men have a cocoa farm, and there are additional sources of income other than cocoa. The income per man calculated from the records is therefore supplemented by a discussion of the economics of other activities. The combination of different income sources which men put together to earn a total is quite varied; I have ethnographic, rather than systematic quantitative data on this question.

The following figures on cocoa income are calculated from the records of the Nkolfeb section of the CENADEC Cooperative, which buys from Nkolfeb and surrounding villages. The Okola branch is the oldest of the present generation of cooperatives in the Lékié, having opened in the 1971-72 season and monopolized the purchase of cocoa in the 1973-74 season. There are inaccuracies in these figures as indices of total cocoa income per person, because illegal buying by private traders certainly continued, and a few men marketed the harvest of others under their own name. However, the mean incomes calculated for the three years when the cooperative monopoly operated are at levels which correspond to farmers' own statements about their cocoa incomes. Because of some differences in the pattern of year-to-year fluctuation, I include figures for both the total membership and the group of 58 farmers who were members in all three years.

Table 11:
Mean Income from Cocoa, All Grades, including rebates(CFA)[2]

Nkolfeb Section, 1973/74 - 1975/76

	1973/74	1974/75	1975/76
All members	90,000	65,663	100,873
Permanent members	94,720	81,382	97,228

Two inferences can be made. First, there is quite a wide variation in cocoa incomes from one year to the next, due to weather, neglect by the government-run anti-capsid campaign, badly timed delivery of chemicals to treat the trees, or neglect by the farmers. Secondly, it is clear that during these three years cash incomes from cocoa stagnated in spite of substantial increases in the price, about 30 percent between 1973 and 1976. This is almost entirely due to a simple decline in the amount marketed; there was little change in the proportions of cocoa sold in each of the three grades of quality.[3]

[2]During the mid-1970s, 1000 francs CFA was about $4.

[3]There are three grades of cocoa: I, II, and Hors Standard. In 1975/76, the prices per kilo were: I:130 CFA, II:120 CFA, and H.S.:90 CFA. About three-fourths of all cocoa is Grade I, less than 3 percent is Grade II, and approximately a fourth is Hors Standard.

Table 12:
Cocoa Tonnage Marketed

Nkolfeb section, 1973/74 - 1975/76

1973/74	1974/75	1975/76
57,268	37,774	46,757

Most farmers knew that the price increases were minimal compared with the price on the world market. The impression of disaffection given by the production figures and by farmers' own comments was confirmed when a much greater price increase in 1977 led to a recovery in the amounts marketed.

For the period of field research, then, men who had cocoa farms made a gross income of about 90,000 francs CFA from their cocoa. About 15-20 percent of this constituted the costs of production: sprayer and chemicals (8,000 CFA p.a.), labor for upkeep in a few cases (about one-sixth of the crop), food for the work party at harvest-time (10 percent of the harvest), and women's share (the low grade cocoa and a further amount of cash and/or high grade cocoa (up to 20 percent; see below). The last category could be considered as "distribution" rather than "costs of production", but, even without this, it means that net cocoa incomes were more in the region of 70,000 francs CFA per year than 90,000.

The rubric for shares in the cocoa harvest could well be based on the melon-seed harvest of the past; the tasks themselves are very similar, including cutting the fruit, extracting, carrying and drying the seeds. Most of harvest work is done by reciprocal work parties of men. The only men who may get some cash payment over and above the essential feasting and drinking are young men who carry the beans by headload from the farm to the village. There are always fewer women than men at cocoa work parties; in one case there were eight women, one of whom was standing in for her father and therefore was rewarded as a man, in a total party of forty people. Women attend through two different means. A man's closest female dependents, wife, mother, unmarried daughter and daughter-in-law, contribute food staples from their farms to the feast, help with the cooking, and gain rights to the low quality cocoa (hors standard) and possibly a cash lump sum from the farmer when he is paid by the cooperative. Judging by the records for the 58 permanent cooperative members, the low quality cocoa sold in 1975/76 accounted for 17 percent of the total value of their cocoa. Shared among three or four women, this could amount to 4- to 5,000 CFA per woman. If he is generous, and has no major outstanding obligations, a man might also give a lump sum in cash, but generally only to his wife and mother. Other women have to be invited, and these are given one basin of high quality cocoa, about one-fifth of an 80 kilo sack, worth about 2,000 CFA at 1970s prices. In the harvesting party mentioned above, only four of the women were there by invitation; their collective share of cocoa amounted to 5 percent of the total harvest.

During the mid-1970s the means of rewarding women was shifting, largely due to the general shifts in income sources, but also due to

cooperative policies. The cooperative gives rebates on the total sales at the end of each season, in proportion to the amounts of cocoa sold through them. This is partly to discourage illegal sales to private merchants. In 1975/76 the amount was about 3 percent of the value of sales, but it was quite an important income source, coming as it did in a lump sum, well after the end of the season. There was some disincentive, then, for farmers to pay women in kind since the sales would not necessarily be made through the man's cooperative number. Before 1975, the value of the low standard cocoa had been exempted from the calculation of rebates, so the question of how women sold this cocoa was a matter of indifference to the farmer, but the policy had just been changed. Obviously, adjustments will be made. Rather than reducing the amounts of cocoa given to the invited women, which clearly resonated with ideas about shares from the past, men appeared to be cutting down on the number of women invited. As a result, many women earn no direct income from cocoa at all. The uncertainty of this whole situation, from the women's point of view, constituted a disincentive to taking part, and an encouragement to find other ways of making money during the harvest period, while it was there to be tapped into.

In the case where a farmer recognized all these obligations, one could add to his "costs of production" a further 20 percent of his gross income, leaving him a disposable income from cocoa of 60 percent of the value of the crop, about 60,000 CFA in 1975/76.

Many young men earned an income from palm wine tapping. In the surveys, this undoubtedly comes under the heading of "other agricultural products," or "palm products." In either case, male/female control cuts across the category; tapping is an exclusively male activity, while palm kernel preparation is exclusively female. As a result, it is impossible to trace trends over the past ten or twenty years. For a man who devotes himself to tapping, every day, five days a week, for half the year, it could be possible to earn in the region of 50,000 CFA. However, hardly anyone does this, and unlike other sources of men's incomes, it yields a regular and small amount rather than large lump sums. It has advantages for meeting day to day expenses, but disadvantages for financing major expenses because it has to be saved over long periods.

Wage labor within the village barely existed in the 1950s, but at present there are some young men, without their own bearing cocoa farms, who occasionally work the farms of others for cash, or clear women's fields. For cocoa work, they may get in the range of 12,000 CFA per year, under rather variable conditions of obligation. Because of the distant elder/junior kin relationship, and the lack of a strict contractual framework for wage work, it can sometimes prove difficult for the worker to get all the money due to him.

Clearing women's fields is worth about 2,000 CFA for .10 hectares, or about 400 CFA for a long day's work. Few men do this, and they are almost exclusively junior men who have no cocoa and have to piece together an income from various sources.

Finally, there was an important innovation in the men's agricultural economy of the Lékié during the 1970s, in the expansion of vegetable growing for the urban market. This could be considerably more lucrative than cocoa, but it is hard enough physical work that the major growers are concentrated in the age groups under about 45 years of age. Risks in production and seasonal price changes make it

unrewarding to attempt to construct a mean income. However, a man who worked a standard plot of 3,000 plants could earn well over 50,000 CFA in a season. One man who worked on tomatoes alone, employed laborers from outside,[4] and left all the marketing to his wife who had been a trader in her own right, estimated that he could gross as much as 300,000 CFA per year. Much of the money he had earned so far went into their house, but he also experimented with farming techniques at some investment cost; for example, he tried renting a plough for preparing the land, only to discover that the topsoil was too shallow, and bought a water pump for irrigation to cut the cost of water-carrying. A wife's share in her husband's tomato production once it stabilizes as a regular, full-time occupation, is a rather open question at present. Much of the production up until the mid-1970s was target earning, often to pay bridewealth.

Men's cash incomes were therefore generally under 100,000 CFA per year, and, except for palm wine, came in lump sums, on a marked seasonal schedule. By comparison, women's incomes from the sales of their produce and from trading margins were closer to 25,000 CFA, and came in relatively small amounts, on a regular basis, in a seasonal distribution which reflects, but is not as marked as, the seasonal distribution in male incomes.

Women's Earnings

Women receive cash from two different sources; they earn it from the produce of their fields, trade, and processing, most of which bring money into the village from outside, and they receive it through redistribution within household and kin networks. The two categories account for approximately equal proportions of the total cash over whose expenditure women exercise control.[5]

Men's contributions can be interpreted either as "redistribution" or "payment for domestic services." By maintaining the right to be erratic providers of cash, men may retain the first interpretation, whereas women see their receipts from men as their share of the total product. Both interpretations can be supported by tradition, depending on whether one focusses on the most general right of a man to control all wealth, or on the more specific level of rights of access to particular items of wealth.

The concept of *akuma* (traditional wealth) is no longer used; cash is referred to by the pidgin word *moni*. The whole process of people phasing out the idea of wealth as a separable sphere of goods

[4]These outside laborers have so far been men from the north of the country, who originally came south to work at the sugar plantation and factory at Mbandjok, left and came towards Yaoundé rather than going home to the North. They earned 8-9,000 CFA per month in 1976, were housed, but received no rations in kind.

[5]The term "approximately" is used because it is a matter of interpretation which category payment from men to women for cocoa work falls into, an earned wage or a redistributive transfer. Men tend to look on it in the latter light, since they do limit attendance to a few invited women. On the other hand, the close female kin, who attend largely by obligation, sometimes look on it as a chore which yields uncertain returns. The amount received explicitly as cocoa payment, in kind or cash, has been categorized here as "own earnings," largely because it is almost exactly equal (7 percent) to the sub-category of "receipts" which are actually gifts from women to women (8 percent); the two problems cancel each other out. In this way, men's contributions are slightly over-stated in the receipts category, and women's self-earned income may be slightly over-stated in the own earnings category.

and activities also reflects the political concept of coming to terms with a situation in which all one's realistic aspirations relate to levels of consumption, not to accumulation and political prominence. Many of the older men still feel the indignity of this, and one might still infer an implicit recourse to a conceptual distinction between wealth and subsistence underlying the distribution of income. If women's income is devoted to "subsistence" it poses no great challenge, but if it becomes "discretionary" the conceptual distinction between wealth and subsistence, however unclear its bases and justifications now are, becomes more blurred than ever. Men recognize that women's market sales offer the possibility of earning beyond a subsistence level; women's cassava sales amount to, as one woman put it, *e lere ngəŋ*, a public exposition of worth. The same woman claimed that their success aroused men's jealousy, and that the poor cassava harvests of the early 1970s, probably due to the drought, were caused by men's witchcraft against women. As in the past, the dividing line between the two categories of goods is open to redefinition. One means of defining it is through the distribution of income itself, and the other is through the division of responsibilities. Income will be discussed first, followed by responsibilities.

Table 13 summarizes the sources of women's cash incomes.

Table 13:
Women's Cash Income, by Source, 1975-76
per woman, per month (N=26)

	Amount (CFA)	Percent
Own earnings		
Sales of own produce	1,724	38
Trade, processing	531	12
Cocoa work	305	7
Total	2,560	57
Transfers		
Husband	1,292	29
Other men	308	6
Women	370	8
Total	1,920	43
GRAND TOTAL	4,530	100

These figures imply that men give somewhere in the range of 25 percent of their net cash incomes to women, and that this makes up, on the average, a little less than half of women's disposable cash. Of course, one of the critical issues is how this varies by age, marital status and so on, but for the moment it is worth pursuing the broad outlines further.

The twenty-six women in the budget study earned 2,255 CFA per woman per month (mean of two months, July and November), from the

sale of their own produce and from trading and processing, that is, from activities which brought money into the village. "Own produce" accounted for 76 percent of this sum and was therefore by far the most important source of income. Only three women sold nothing from their farms during the two months, and most sold something at least once a week. Most of the sales were staple foods: cassava, maize, cocoyams, and plantains, which gives some circumstantial support to the conclusion from the farm study that groundnuts are not in surplus at all. Trade and processing is less important; the total amount earned is much lower and twelve of the women had no earnings in this category.

Most of the produce which women sell is not strictly seasonal, and even those goods which do follow a seasonal cycle, such as yams, sweet potatoes, maize, and green leaves, have different harvest seasons from one another. Women are in a position to have almost constant incomes from their own produce throughout the year. In fact, however, their incomes fluctuate, not as much as men's incomes, but on the same seasonal cycle. Women's cash in November, the cocoa harvest season, was 77 percent higher than in July. Contrary to initial expectations, the increased income of women during the cocoa season is not made up entirely of increased transfers from men, ceded to women when the male economy is richer. "Own earnings" went up absolutely and proportionally compared with transfers, particularly in trade, reflecting the fact that women's incomes respond to general levels of demand in the regional economy, and less directly to the incomes of their own menfolk. Table 14 summarizes the seasonality of income by source.

Table 14:
Women's Cash Incomes, by Source, per Woman
July and November

	Amount (CFA)		Percent	
	July	November	July	November
Own Earnings				
- own produce	1,280	2,167	39	37
- resale	238	825	7	14
- cocoa work	-	611	-	11
Total	1,518	3,603	46	62
Transfers				
- husband	1,032	1,533	32	27
- other men	379	237	12	4
- women	345	394	10	7
Total	1,756	2,184	54	38
Grand Total	3,274	5,787	100	100

There are variations, some according to individual situations, and others more systematically related to marital status or other factors. However, no woman is entirely dependent on a man for cash. Every woman expects to earn and control an income. The question then arises of what they and their male kin expect one another to do with the income.

Expenses

The share of expenses and the content of the consumption bundle are closely related and have changed over the past two decades. Binet's study suggests that the vast majority of expenses were financed by men's cocoa incomes during the 1950s. They were spent in the following way: on clothing (17 percent), bridewealth (13 percent), food (11 percent), alcoholic drinks (approx. 3 percent), tax (10 percent), utensils (10 percent), housing (7.5 percent), gifts (7 percent), and a set of smaller categories accounting for under 5 percent each.

The differences between these findings and those of the 1964-65 study are complex to interpret because not only had real incomes changed, but so had the relative proportions in male and female hands. Categories associated with male incomes had declined, some by a small proportion (bridewealth and gifts taken together fell from 20 percent to 19 percent), and others dramatically (housing fell from 7.5 percent to 1 percent) (SEDES 1964-5:92, figures for Obala). The decline in housing expenses seems clearly related to the decline in cocoa incomes; housing is paid for by men and is the kind of cost which can be postponed. People in the countryside also claimed that the marriage rate fell because levels of bridewealth remained stable, and marriage is also an expense which can be postponed. Food and drink expenditure, by contrast had risen from 14 percent to 23 percent of total expenses, and clothing from 17 percent to 23 percent. This pattern of change is consonant with Engel's Law, where reduced income leads to a greater proportion spent on food. However, consonance with Engel's Law should not be expected for an economy where non-market food provision is a possibility.

As I suggested earlier, a further factor is a shift in responsibility for purchased food from men to women. My own data suggest that the amounts of money given to women by men (a mean of 1,600 CFA per month), if spent entirely on food and minor household needs such as soap and kerosene, could only cover about half of the expenditure on these items (3,341 CFA per month). To elaborate this category of expenses a little further, between two-thirds and four-fifths of this amount is spent on food items, half to two-thirds of it on animal protein, mainly different kinds of fish. One could conclude that even the animal protein component of the diet by itself could barely be covered by men's contributions, leaving oil, salt, purchased condiments, the odd kilo of rice as well as small household needs entirely uncovered, if, in fact, men had retained the major responsibility for food purchases.

The women's budgets and their own statements support this conclusion. While they expect their husbands to contribute to all of these subsistence and maintenance costs, their own money is overwhelmingly devoted to basic welfare. Table 15 summarizes the main categories of expenditure for women.

Table 15:
Women's Cash Expenses, per Woman, per Month

	Amount (CFA)	Percent
Food, household	3,341	74
Transport	718	16
Clothes	433	10
Total	4,492	100

It is important to note that women are not simply making up for inadequacies in the subsistence economy. Few bought any staple foods at all, amounting to a very occasional purchase of rice for simple variety in the diet and some groundnuts for a woman newly established in her marital village. The rest, two-thirds or more of the cash devoted to food alone, was for animal protein, which had been supplied in the past from the men's hunting and the women's fishing. Most women purchased meat or fish between six and ten times during each four week period of the budget study.

Everyone agrees that the diet is now less rich and varied than it had been in the past. People complain that they eat too much *kpem*, cassava leaf and groundnut sauce, taken with boiled cassava. There is no doubt that the diet has been "feminized" in cultural terms. The specifically men's foods, such as *kpędę* yams and many of the roast meats have either disappeared altogether or greatly diminished in frequency, to be replaced by the sauces which formed the female diet. But the procurement of the diet has also been feminized, and, in that way, has been partially insulated from the effects of fluctuations in market price. Men's incomes could hardly be stretched to cover all these costs, given the high prices of the items still considered to be their prime responsibility.

The cash component of bridewealth takes about a year or a year and a half of the average cocoa revenue, and the in-kind component, a further year's worth.[6] A house costs well over two years of cocoa income. The school fees for a child in secondary school can be up to a year of cocoa income, and even elementary public or mission school can account for 5,000 CFA per child or more.[7] Even with a cash income of 100,000 CFA p.a. and all the food provided by his wife, a man who wants to educate his children can find himself stretched beyond the limit. One father of seven children, whose income from cocoa was recorded as 92,655 CFA in the cooperative records for 1975-76, worked as a laborer on someone else's farm, tapped palm wine regularly, and still lived in an unfinished house with no carpentered windows or doors.

The lumpy and intermittent nature of men's expenses means that women cannot count on regular support. The relationship between men and women concerning money is often adversarial. Money is a major cause of dispute. Women try a whole variety of means to tap into

[6]The determinants of bridewealth levels are complex and poorly understood, especially the way in which either the total amount or the phasing of the "debt" relates to commodity prices and people's incomes. Examples are given in Appendix O, and a general historical overview in Guyer 1983a.

[7]Examples are given in Appendix O.

men's incomes and to avoid situations where they are called on to give their earnings to men. They claim that meat and kerosene are still men's obligations, and complain of money wasted on drink and entertainment. Many men still insist on their right to do, and give, whatever they like, and some occasionally make arbitrary gestures to prove the point.

In the long run, the outcome of all this negotiation has been to change the expectations. With the shift in income sources, women have taken over some of the household expenses, extra food items, soap, kerosene, snacks for children, and some clothing and transport for themselves. In so doing, of course, they strengthen the grounds on which to resist pooling the cash itself. It is mainly with respect to investment in their children's future that direct income pooling occurs. There is a growing realization that the future of both parents lies in being able to establish their children. Women do not begrudge men's incomes spent on the school fees of their children and this item is eating further and further into the budget. A portion of a wife's savings from rotating credit associations is nearly always given to her husband, ostensibly to do what he likes with, but usually for bridewealth for a son, school fees, and the other lump sum costs.

One has to be careful with the use of a term like "complementarity" to depict this relationship. Where men's and women's spheres are considered functionally complementary, devoted to different purposes and backed by a powerful ideological framework, the most likely point of negotiation under changed circumstances is in the definition of whether a new task, good, or source of income falls into one sphere or the other, and whether old rubrics of intersphere distribution apply. Cash income makes the two spheres potential substitutes rather than complements; I say potential, because in many areas the lump sum/penny-penny distinction in the phasing of earning is used to impose a new justification for complementarity (see Lawson 1972). If women's incomes rise, and certain expenditures such as school fees are considered as joint expenses, then the two sources of income become substitutes and simple additives, rather than complements. The terms of negotiation are then, not who pays for what, but how the goals are decided. People are engaged in these processes all the time, but so are the forces which shape the economic environment. The complementarity of male and female work and income during the early cocoa period was functional; assured of the diet, farmers have not been as militant about prices as other cocoa farmers. The commercialization of women's food crops, and the insertion of school fees into the consumption bundle may change these relations, placing at least one element of consumption in a category where additive income-pooling occurs. Again, this is a piecemeal step towards more classic "peasant" conjugal patterns, but it does not apply to all income, and therefore does not yet dictate the allocation of labor.

One cannot, however, build a model of the dialectics of male and female economies on the basis of the numerically and ideologically dominant marriage relationship alone, because the long term decline in the marriage rate results in a substantial proportion of production and consumption taking place outside of this relationship. The difference between the economies of the married and the unmarried gives some sense of the implications of marriage rates for occupa-

tional specialization, and also, I believe, supports the earlier argument that the long run implications of a declining marriage rate may be quite important. The following section turns to dimensions of differentiation.

Dimensions of Differentiation

Like may other studies of African rural economies, Binet's and Marticou's studies in the 1950s found several cross-cutting principles of income differentiation: age, polygyny, occupation, location. It has been far from clear that any of these were creating structural class differentiation, and some have argued that the forces are against this (Weber 1977).[8] There is little indication that variations in men's wealth are, at present and on the whole, determined by anything more than the physical and social power of the years between 30 and 60, personal characteristics, and market access.

There is a similar lack of clarity about differentiation among women. The single clear factor is the influence of market access; women's farms and personal incomes were considerably larger in Nkometou, on the main road, than in Nkolfeb, on a muddy, barely passable side-track, two or three miles from an equally muddy main road. The Nkometou women earned over three times as much from sales of their produce as Nkolfeb women, although less in resale and trade. A high proportion of the income which Nkolfeb women made in trade was made in retail sales of imported goods in the village, whereas most of the trading income in Nkometou was from crops sold to the city. The women in Nkometou also received more from their menfolk in absolute, though not relative, terms, mainly because the whole village was wealthier from the diversity of occupations which had grown up owing to its access to Yaoundé. Women in Nkometou have been able to expand production in ways which are unrewarding in villages on poor roads.

The differences between married and unmarried women are not, therefore, overlaid with or determined by other dominant principles of income differentiation. With this in mind, it is quite striking to note the nature of the differences. Unmarried women are in a situation of little disadvantage in making a day-to-day living; the precipitation of male and female farm organization applies across the board to married as well as unmarried women. But they are in an insecure position with respect to the expansion of farm production for the market, they earn only enough money from trade to make up for lack of transfers from men, and therefore are poorly placed to invest in their children. Their incomes are not high enough to pay school fees, and their rights to land are unclear. That is, being a single mother is highly viable in the short run and highly problematic in the long run.

[8]Le Plaideur divided the population into five categories according to the amounts of cocoa produced per year. Although the range was very wide, he was largely unsuccessful in finding clear correlates which worked consistently across all categories, either in the age of the farmer, the amount of food crops by comparison with cocoa, or household structure. He tends to have recourse to "motivations" (1977:86) to explain it. Certainly the correlate he explores most closely, the amount of male and female labor devoted to food crops, seems to show that cocoa and food expand together rather than that they are competitive. The picture is simply not clear.

All women have access to land to make a food farm. Married women have a somewhat better chance of getting a man's help with the clearing, and they are potentially in a position to make the expansions in production which demand male input, namely clearing labor for *esep*, and relief from clearing the groundnut field to allow for the cultivation of minor fields. As was shown in Table 9 (above), married women tend to have somewhat larger fields than unmarried women. They also have more diverse farms, but support more dependents than unmarried women. The budgets show that unmarried women are most disadvantaged with respect to access to male incomes. Adding together the categories of cocoa incomes, husbands' transfers and gifts from other men, unmarried women receive a little under 40 percent of the mean amounts made available to married women. However, they do make up for some of these disadvantages, so that their total incomes are about 80 percent of those of married women, and this is primarily achieved through trade. Table 16 summarizes the budgets. It is worth commenting parenthetically on an important methodological issue here. Six out of the nine unmarried women were living in a household headed by a man. With a "household" methodology, or one which dealt simply with a standard male and female, all the following similarities and differences would be masked.

Table 16:
Cash Income of Married and Unmarried Women
By Source, per Woman, per Month

	Married (N=17)		Unmarried (N=9)	
	Amount	Percent	Amount	Percent
Own Earnings				
- Sales	1,692	35	1,782	45
- Trade	349	7	875	23
- Cocoa work	316	6	296	8
Total	2,357	48	2,953	76
Transfers				
- Husbands	1,977	40	0	0
- Other men	129	3	645	17
- Women	415	9	285	7
Total	2,521	52	930	24
Grand Total	4,878	100	3,883	100

These two budgets indicate a very similar level of living in the two categories of women. In day-to-day terms, being unmarried means somewhat more work, and less financial help, but it does not bring a significant decline in the entire standard of living. However, the extra effort required to achieve this is not put into farming itself. In fact, the study of the field system suggests that beyond a certain point, the elaboration of the farm probably requires male

input in particular ways, such as taking over the clearing of the first-season field. That unmarried women's sales are not higher, considering that they have fewer dependents, may reflect the fact that there are eventual limits to working alone. Up to this point, as the figures on sales suggest, unmarried women are able to manage. Beyond it, the extra income is made from an activity which is not tied so tightly to the activity structure and specific pressures of the field system, namely trade; this is 23 percent of cash income for unmarried women, only 7 percent for married women.

The expenditures reflect the same pattern; unmarried women spend their somewhat lower incomes on the same things as married women, with the single exception that they spend considerably more, proportionally, on personal transport which is an expense associated with trade (Table 17).

Table 17:
Cash Expenses, Married and Unmarried Women,
by Source, per Woman, per Month.

	Married (N=17)		Unmarried (N=9)	
	Amount	Percent	Amount	Percent
Food and household	3,843	76	2,393	71
Transport	723	14	710	21
Clothes	512	10	285	8
Total	5,078	100	3,388	100

The similarities on all these measures are striking enough to support the conclusion that, with respect to levels of routine consumption, income and expenditure, married and unmarried women fall within a single range and constitute a single population. The precipitation of male and female activities over the past several decades means that women can be self-supporting without suffering a dramatic decline in welfare. It is not considered by women to be a desirable alternative, but it is workable.

The similarity of women's patterns of activity across different marital statuses is quite striking by contrast with other West African cases, where there is some occupational specialization and a developmental cycle of women's economic life (for example, Marshall 1964). Single women do trade somewhat more than married women, but occupational differentiation along these, or any other lines, is still emerging. Trade in food crops is the most rapidly expanding income earning opportunity for women other than farming itself; the feeding of Yaoundé from its Beti hinterland absolutely demands the development of traders and processors. The general public image is that this new category of personnel, which has developed only in the ten to fifteen years since Independence, is entirely made up of unmarried women. In her study of Yaoundé market women, Diarra argued against this position and suggested that most women had a family to support (1974). I would modify this conclusion to suggest the following, that most of the married women who trade are either urban residents or, like the women of Nkometou, live within a radius of

the city where it is feasible to get to and from market in a single day. Outside this radius, the successful rural-based traders tend to be unmarried, although they do, as Diarra says, have families to support if they have children. Men do not like their wives to be absent overnight, the demands of a large farm are insistent, and transport is unreliable.

In the small sample, all of the Nkometou women who made money from trade margins were married. One woman had a regular stall in the urban market which she shared with another woman. In Nkolfeb, the only women who made money from trade in July were unmarried, and in November, during the cocoa season, the married women with incomes from trade made them almost exclusively through retail sales of beer, wine, and cooked food in the village, and not from the Yaoundé food trade at all.

Even without the restrictions on movement imposed by marriage, a rural-based woman is still doing a juggling act of farming and trading because she still has to feed herself and her children. Here one can see developing some new forms of the division of labor among women which are, at present, only rudimentary. There are some cases where two women work together, one trading and one farming. Most of these are mother-daughter enterprises; one unusual case involved co-wives. Two cases of the former and one of the latter are described here to indicate how it functions.

Marie (all names are pseudonyms) is an unmarried woman of 24 with two small children. She is educated to secondary school level, speaks French, and would prefer "an office job," but such positions for women are very few and far between. She gets nothing from the fathers of her children, and no help from her own father, either with cash or work on her farm. A very vigorous and enterprising woman, she has almost entirely specialized in the food trade and in growing market crops, such as tomatoes. She has a token groundnut field, and when she is in the village, works on her mother's standard size farm. Her own and her children's staple foods come almost entirely from the mother's farm which is cultivated along the lines of most of the other farms of married women. She also relies on her mother to look after the older child when she travels, the younger one still being at the breast.

Marie had the second highest cash income in the budget sample. A third of her cash income came from the farm, mainly crops from specialty fields such as yams and tomatoes. Trade accounted for 52 percent of her income, by contrast with 7 percent for the married women, cocoa work was 13 percent and all transfers in cash amounted to only 2 percent, a single gift from her brother. Her expenses from this relatively high income reflected her assumption of many responsibilities towards her mother. She paid for most of the meat and fish in the family diet, and bought clothes for her younger siblings, and still accumulated trading capital for reinvestment.

In this way, she was able to remain in the rural area without having her own standard farm, even after the birth of children, and her mother was able to get access to a cash income other than her husband's, which at that time was almost totally devoted to the school fees of older children. The whole relationship came under the rubric of mother-daughter obligations.

Cecile is about the same age, with a similar educational background, but has no children. Her father is also stretched very thin

supporting a son at the university and several others in school. Cecile is fed from her mother's farm and spends all her time preparing cooked confectionary to sell to the travellers passing on the road, or in the city. She makes a considerable profit, and spends most of it on meat and fish for her mother to prepare.

The collaboration of co-wives is unlikely to become an axis of the division of labor, simply because polygyny is at a low level and, in most polygynous households both wives have children and the same kind of farm. In this one case, each wife had a disability which complemented the other; one was lame in one leg, but had borne seven children, while the other was strong but childless. By an unusual cooperative arrangement, the latter made the farm to feed the family and took care of the children, while the other spent all her time trading. Although each had the statutory separate kitchen, the meals came from a shared source.

The independent, trading, unmarried mother is not, however, the norm. Most women still farm, and do processing and trade on a small-scale basis. In other words, the unmarried woman's steps towards other occupations represent only a tendency or potential, not an institutionalized basis for the development of occupational diversification among village women. From the perspective of the regional food supply economy, this small-scale activity, by rural-based women, is still an important and possibly a growing factor, particularly in the Yaoundé night markets. But the basis for specialization may, in the long run, rest in the urban areas, with women who come from farming traditions, and who are under pressure to earn a personal income but have no access to land. The larger picture of occupational change among women has an urban/rural and multi-ethnic dimension beyond any emergent differentiation among rural-based women.

Similarly, differentiation in access to productive resources may be tending in certain directions but is by no means fully realized. The ambiguities of the rights of children born to unmarried women cannot be without importance in an economy where inheritance is the main way of acquiring land. But this possibility could equally be compensated for if, for example, the rate of small-scale polygyny were to rise again, thereby reducing the proportion of unmarried women, or different legitimacy provisions were implemented. Another possibility for an increasing range of rural incomes is that locally born people employed in the formal sector will matriculate their land rights and establish rural enterprises in their home villages. But this does not necessarily set in motion a process of exclusion or reduction in land access for other villagers.

Discussion

Differentiation, whether in terms of occupational diversification or social stratification, cannot be considered progressive or structural unless there are institutions which perpetuate it. Apart from the broad differentiation between those in formal sector employment and those in self-employment in the regional agricultural sector, there is a set of possible directions, not inevitable processes. Some of the seeds from which these may grow have been indicated, as have the constraints which could redress them. It is not a question of a general ideology of "shared poverty" (Geertz 1964) or

"the economy of affection" (Hyden 1980); neither "sharing" nor "poverty" nor "affection" evokes very accurately the dynamics of economic life in Beti villages. It is rather a function of three factors: the success of the groundnut field as a material base for subsistence, which prevents people from being forced into rural wage labor or other insecure non-farm occupations; the very limited domestic or outside investment to finance occupational diversification into activities with as high, or higher, returns to labor than farming; and the law on property and status, containing ambiguities which people are in a stronger position to resolve to their own advantage if they are actually there, working the land. The fact that these conditions affect lateral occupational diversification as well as stratification seems to me increasingly important in the context of the growth of the food market, which sets a greater challenge to women's farming than the pressures of the past. I return to general models of change in the final commentary.

Chapter 8:

CONCLUDING COMMENTARY

The most general issue which lies behind this work is the classic one of tracing and accounting for the "division of labor in society," in both its hierarchical and lateral dimensions, as a political and material process. In general and evolutionary models the two tend to be elided - by temporal foreshortening, by deriving one from the other, or by linking the two in an overall, revolutionary change. As a result, the way in which they have interacted, the social processes themselves, when looked at under Hart's microscope or when experienced over a human lifetime, remain obscure. For the kind of change occuring in Africa in the twentieth century, the question of how the microprocesses have actually unfolded is of great theoretical and practical importance.

A whole series of questions can be posed. Can the social differentiation of labor develop within rural society without the kind of family system indicated by Goody and assumed in peasant theory? If "intensification" of agricultural practice provokes rising land values and the development of corporate family property, how intense is "intense," in systems with different social and technical characteristics? Are types of cropping system irrelevant to this logic? How might it work in the context of a national legal code? If, as Ember argues in an interesting ethnographic survey (1983), the development of primary processing techniques has consigned women to domestic processing labor, does it matter why people process more: to preserve domestic food self-sufficiency in the context of expansion into less fertile and therefore less reliable environments? to meet increased demand by an elite for taxes and tribute in kind in a storable form? through calculation of transport costs and spoilage losses in the context of demand from an expanding market? In other words, in what ways have particular political and economic relations affected the techniques and structures of work at the domestic and local level? And if, as Ember notes, increased processing has shown a strong historical association with cereal economies, what kinds of pressures and processes might be at work in root and plantain economies? How has the social division of labor developed among women in rural economies, as conceptually distinct from the division of labor between men or between households?

The "family" is only one of the levels at which these issues can be addressed, but it is an important one because of the theoretical links made between family and wider social structures, and because it accounts for a substantial proportion of the African rural product. The implications of socio-political change and material life for one another pass through the culture and politics of familial relations. Because the former is the guiding overall concern, I have avoided defining the latter into a particular structure, either the peasant household or some other unit emanating from the principles of a culturally specific kinship structure.[1] As a strategy I have

[1]Dissatisfaction with "lineage" and "household" as more than descriptive terms is expressed in Guyer 1981b.

preferred to define the socio-political structure and the repertoire contained in productive life, and to explore the terrain between, where people re-think and rework their relationships and activities in the light of their conditions and the knowledge, concepts, and material resources under their control. Certain patterns of change emerge from this, and it is the interpretation of their shape which remains the central problem.

Political-Economic Structures and Agricultural Patterns

In terms of the structures of accumulation, there have been two major watersheds in modern Beti history: the imposition of taxes in labor and cash by the colonial government in the early twentieth century, and recourse to control of export crop markets and prices after World War II. There are associated changes in family policy which correspond to these shifts. Initially, controls already present in the kinship and marriage system were reinforced, particularly conditions of marriage and divorce. After 1946 this framework was dismantled in favor of legal and economic policies which promoted a peasant family structure and small-scale production for a market system largely controlled by foreign traders and the state.

Changes in the scale of family enterprise are associated with these shifts. Less marked, but still apparent, are corresponding bursts of growth in export production, one in the 1920s under the force of cash and labor taxes, and another gathering momentum after the war when direct controls were lifted and men of all ages and statuses developed their own cocoa farms.[2] Innovation, in the technical sense of new crops, agricultural techniques, and processing methods, took place in both systems, but was probably more aggressive and experimental on the chiefs' plantations.

The functional consonance that this approach conveys must be recognized, however, as partial and incomplete because certain dynamics have run across the tidal pull. The shift around World War II was not a simple result of policy; policy changes themselves were a response to quiet but obstinate resistance, beginning to gather momentum during the Great Depression. Men were trying to avoid the chiefs' exactions and develop their own market production, and women were escaping from the rigid constraints of the colonial marriage system as early as the 1920s by enrolling in the Christian sixas. When Zogo Fouda Ngono died in 1939, most of his widows simply ran away, and one of them took part of his fortune along with her. The inventory of his property soberly draws up lists of wives, assigns bridewealth values, and notes their fate in widow inheritance as if they were truly passive items, whereas local wisdom suggests that the heirs lost control. Whether of their own volition or encouraged by fathers and brothers, the widows simply left, resulting, it is said, in a peak birth rate about a year later. Post-war colonial philosophy was certainly an independent factor in local change, but the control system had begun to crumble long before (see Guyer 1981).

The neat correspondence also disappears when one looks at productive patterns in food cultivation. The constant motif of the women's groundnut field runs across all three productive systems. As an element in accumulative dynamics, it has provided prestige goods

[2]For detailed figures on cocoa expansion see Assoumou 1977.

which entered into the status of headmen within regional political systems and of women within villages; it has constituted a subsistence safety net as male labor was drawn off for colonial enterprise; and it has protected the peasant diet from radical effects of fluctuating international cocoa prices. Now it provides staples to the Yaoundé market as well as providing the security for experimentation to be carried out in other types of field and other enterprises. It is still an element in women's sense of identity. Certainly it has changed, but only in terms of intensity, frequency, and other quantitative dimensions.

This is not explicable in solely ecological or adaptive terms. Certainly the present system is adapted to rainfall, soil type, and nutritional needs, but the variation in farming across the forest-savanna belt of West Africa makes any simple reductionism implausible, however (see Chauveau et al 1981; Richards 1983), and the groundnuts do not produce as well in this environment as they do in the savannas further north.

In social and economic terms, the groundnut rotation is an isolable element which has been combined in familial enterprises of different sizes, with different extractive relationships with the wider economy. Its links to other productive sequences are weak and, under modern conditions of settlement with little virgin forest brought into new cultivation, dispensable. This means that the actual, historically shifting, links are politically and ideologically forged. In the terms which Rey takes from Marx to apply to the "lineage mode of production," the Beti system involved the real subordination of labor only at the most minimal social level and with respect to only a small part of the productive process. Everything beyond that, the basis of accumulation on a larger scale, involved the formal subordination of the female element, through placing greater demands on it, intensifying appropriation, and increasing the number of like units brought under a single authority. This was essentially what the *grands polygames* achieved, with the single exception of Zogo Fouda Ngono who made the most radical innovation in labor organization in the history of Beti farming. The administrators who saw the possibility of "a dust of individuals" and "ultimate anarchy" (A.R. 1938:88) in the Beti region were right, not because there was no authority and no subordination, but because the productive system contained this potential for disaggregation as a labor process.

The whole history of food production illustrates the fact that only through the exercise of power has the size of productive units been built up and broken down. The one cumulative effect is that the female pattern of production has become increasingly self-contained and independently viable. Where cycles of production have this cultural and material integrity, "autonomy" and political "subordination" are not opposites, but simultaneous processes; it is because of this potential for integrity, and the relative lack of "real subordination," that the political means of tapping into it, bringing its sequences and products under control, have been so important (see also Weber 1977).

Although this pattern of food provision can be seen in retrospect, or from an analytical point of view, as functional to wider systems, it has not always been seen as optimal, especially by the representatives of government. Attempts have been made to undermine,

circumvent, and re-articulate the sexual division of labor. A few illustrations will demonstrate the depth of frustration with which officialdom has viewed the local system. In the early colonial period, it was a question of trying to get the men to extend their agricultural activities into rice cultivation and various other colonial projects. This required the strategic, and in some places regular, use of force. To some degree the resistance was due to low returns rather than cultural barriers, but even today there are subtle continuities in men's production activities; for example, the hoeing of tomato fields is done with a long-handled hoe, not the women's hoe, and men's fields of cocoa, plantain, maize, yams, and tomatoes are not intercropped unless a woman also works on them. Beti men have not been willing to take up just any crop or technique. It has even been said that they are "not really farmers," even after more than fifty years of production for the market. In the case of Eton men, who are generally thought of locally as hard workers, it is less a question of the amount of work, or the degree of commitment to farming, than of the jealous protection of the dignity of choosing the tasks and the times.[3]

During the early 1960s, advisors saw women's farming as a fundamental stumbling block because it hindered occupational differentiation and the development of internal market relations. Underlining every point, Barboteu et al. suggest that women's food cultivation is "an agricultural problem ... a land tenure problem ... a marketing problem," and gives rise to "the problem of rural exodus ... and the servitude of the women"; the only way out is for women's work to become restricted to "housewifery, using the resources of their husbands, and the upbringing of children" (1962:10).[4] During the 1970s, a report on the stagnation in cocoa output and the need to replace old trees made the following suggestion:

> to convince the woman to abandon the traditional sexual division of labor, which limits her role to food production, and to accept work in the income-earning cocoa sector. The inevitable monetary expenses which will follow, will constrain the woman to participate in tasks in cocoa production in order to merit, socially, the cash used for investment in food. In this exchange, the peasant should accept to provide an iron roof for his wife's house, and through this the latter will gain an economic power she has never had before (LePlaideur 1977:190, 145, 190).

[3]The concept of *ati*, generally glossed as "noble," and linguistically related to *nti*, the status term which, in its plural is the "ethnic" term Beti, can apply to personal qualities aside from status. A man who maintains his independence, of mind and manner as well as activity, is *ati*. In current village life it is still an admired quality. A man may be unpredictable - absent himself without explanation, work to extremes for a few days while consuming only palm wine, spend nights without sleep, and so on - as an antidote to boredom, a kind of personal ordeal, and as a demonstration of self-control. It is not the sheer amount of physical labor which is resisted, nor is physical labor per se considered low status or humiliating; it is rather the insistent, exacting, predictable rhythms built into the Euopean conception of labor which turns a man who is *ati* into *main d'ouevre*.

[4]This opinion is essentially echoed in Huntington (1975) and Hart (1982), although not as an end in itself, but as a means to promoting greater possibilities for women in the next generation.

In economic, agronomic, social, and cultural terms this would be a radical shift. It would imply that cocoa farmers get high enough incomes, and secure enough means of spreading them over the year, to allow them to take up responsibility for a higher proportion of the food supply. It would mean phasing out the intensive rotations in the field system, perhaps in favor of certain staples of the tropical rain forest, plantain, and cocoyam. It would mean restructuring the control and distribution of income in domestic and kin relations. And it would mean the women giving up the one crop which has been a basis for prestige. In the long run nothing is impossible, but a phasing out of women's farming seems highly unlikely except under circumstances which still accord women an individual product that has some cultural and/or economic value.

This system does not operate like a classic model of the peasant division of labor where male and female activities absolutely require one another on a rigorous basis of daily, seasonal, and lifetime interdigitation and mutual dependence, as in systems with complex processing, storage, and manufacture within domestic life.[5] It is significant that the terms of dispute center on power exercized at the beginning and end of production cycles, that is, on access to land and control of income, and that hardly any ritual or political attention is given to the synchronization of work routines or the interdigitation of tasks, either within or between families.[6]

The present rapid expansion of the food market, however, sets up a new challenge to this system. No modern city is, or can be, entirely supplied from its immediate hinterland, but there is a theoretical expectation in regional geography that the hinterland will orient production to urban demand in one way or another. The challenge is not simply one of production being up against its physical limits; this is a relatively fertile area where some goods are still in excess over the capacity to evacuate them, there is still unused land, and the farming population has a repertoire of crops and field types to draw on. It is rather that the bases for lateral differentiation of skills and occupations is so embryonic in both policy and local social organization that the flexibilities in production may not be developed. This depends not on a fixed logic in women's farming so much as on the regional and domestic politics of building up and diversifying the intermediary sector.[7] In the

[5]The contrast I have in mind is between this and, for example, the Japanese pre-industrial division of labor as described by Smith 1959.

[6]The division of labor as conceptualized in the new religions of Africa, and their implications for work, is a subject of enormous interest. Fernandez's work (1982) in the Bwiti religion among the Fang of Gabon, who are culturally and linguistically related to the Beti, gives a fascinating illustration of the ritual elaboration of gender opposition and the tension of gender relations. This would seem quite different from the definition of "woman's place" contained in other peasant religions. The Beti in Cameroon are predominantly orthodox Catholics, and there are no major religious traditions or organizations outside of the Church.

[7]Carol E. Smith's most recent article on intermediate levels of organization in the Guatemalan Highlands, studied in a historical and political perspective, is particularly interesting on the emerging structures within and between Indian communities and their relationship with capitalist and state demands (1984). It raises important comparative questions about shifts in the organization of production in the context of a regional market system which is gradually strengthening itself, largely on the basis of local demand and initiative.

following discussion, I am taking for granted that the incentives and/or pressures would have to be greater than can be envisaged at present for rural-based married women to give up their groundnut fields.

It could be that trade and transport will be improved, allowing the Beti hinterland to remain primarily a supplier of fresh and perishable food, including its major staples of cassava, plantain, cocoyams, and possibly more yams. At the regional level, this requires improvement in transport, as almost every commentator has ever recommended.[8] The relative poverty of Nkolfeb is largely due to its road, which is hilly, muddy, rutted, and served by very little transport at all outside of the cocoa season. To the south of Yaoundé there are villages serviced by a single unlicensed clandestine taxi per day, on a road marked as a major thoroughfare on the map. The hinterland of Yaoundé could hardly be further from the featureless plain of the model of central place theory, but even so the present infrastructure is rudimentary for a region with such a long history of involvement in the export market.

It also implies more people and more capital in trade and transport, which has implications for domestic organization. For men to go into food production and trade to a much greater degree than at present, the returns to labor would probably have to rise closer to the returns to labor in cocoa production. If they are kept lower, then the requisite labor force will have to come from women, or possibly urban-based men.[9] This means the release of some women from farming, whether urban-based women or rural unmarried women, and/or the release of some of the limitations on the freedom of movement and personal investment of rural married women. As I have shown, there is some flexibility in a farming woman's work schedule, one which lends itself more easily to frequent, short additional activities than to commitments of several days at a time. In other words, women could cover a greater range of intermediary occupations, while a certain large proportion of them remained in agricultural production, if constraints on their mobility were mitigated and they had funds to finance themselves.

Alternatively, rural primary processing could be improved and generalized, allowing this region to provide more food in dried or preserved form than it does at present. This would require investments at the village level either of the very simple kind, for example, made for the fermentation and drying of cocoa beans, or with greater capitalization. At the moment, the "windfall gain" of villages on the newly built Obala road is a dramatic and rather pitiful demonstration of the low level of investment in food processing; wherever the abandoned paved surface of the old road is still in-

[8]For example, LeFebvre's four-volume report on development in the Lékié (1972), reports that the roads were "absolutely deplorable."

[9]In 1979, when the state marketing structure had monopolized cocoa purchases, there were many small transporters and buyers who had operated independently or been contracted to large merchants, and who were squeezed out. At least a few of these men seemed to be going into the food trade.

tact, it is covered with cassava set out to dry. There is obviously a demand for aids to processing, but they require the kind of small-scale funds which women themselves find difficult to mobilize. As long as methods are not too labor-intensive they may be consonant with work routines as they now exist. Beyond a certain labor demand, they would involve some kind of division of labor between rural-based farmers and processers, whose social basis it is not easy to project at the moment. It would be useful to study the division of labor in past cases where processing was done in the villages or in a capitalized local center, such as the rice milling operation in Nanga Eboko in the 1950s, or the bulk sale of cassava by the Provident Societies to the now-defunct tobacco plantation north of Obala (Guyer 1980s).

Finally, the barriers to both these developments could be so great as to reduce the competitiveness of the whole system in the face of commercial farming or food imports. The basis has been laid for commercial farming in the open regions beyond the Mbam River, on the new highway from Yaoundé to the West, but historically the larger agricultural enterprises have been expensive and have had difficulty supervising the labor force.

The possibility of a division of labor among women developing in the context of women's farming, as part of an urban supply system, has hardly been formulated.[10] Exploring that possibility is not automatically a romanticization of women's farming, but a way of looking at the development of the division of labor, as a general progressive force and as a classic subject of sociological study, as involving a set of processes, none of which, taken alone, is truly determinate. The present condition of women's farming in the Yaoundé area is not only a function of the "nature" of women's farming, or of forces inherent in cash crop expansion, but also of decades of strict limits placed on rural organizations. Only for quite brief periods has there been enough political space for the formation of groups beyond the familial level. In the mid-1970s the Church, the political party, and the state-controlled cooperatives were the only contexts in which new organizations could be formed. In the early 1980s, the rapid growth of women's credit associations partially outside these confines has provoked suspicion, and women's trade has got a mixed, but generally hostile, press during the 1970s (See Guyer 1983b). At the familial level there are other obstacles to investment and experimentation in women's occupations, including the present provisions of land tenure. The fact that a man needs his wife on the farm, over and above the actual goods she produces, provides some security of tenure to married women, but at the same time makes it more difficult to do other things. The resulting insistent rhythm of work on the farm and in domestic life, women's

[10]For a more general argument in favor of policies supporting women's farming, see Henn 1983.

limited access to funds, and the pressures to spend what they have on immediate consumption or education needs for their children, are all real forces. But their means of operation is political, in the broad sense, and not inevitable or natural.

Theoretical Orientation

At a more general level, this study is guided in certain theoretical directions which need to be made more explicit. The challenge thrown down by history and world systems analysis to the local systems analysis classically done by anthropologists has largely been accepted, at least in principle. The problem is that a serious acceptance, as distinct from a token indication of "history and context," or a complete capitulation to the determining power of external forces, implies a daunting opening-up of the field of study, and a flooding in of questions about the concepts to be used to describe the links from one level to another of such a vastly inclusive system.

The metaphor of center and periphery, if taken to refer to a river rather than a plain, conveys a sense of the complexity of swirls, eddies, whirlpools, and stagnant backwaters which people concerned with life at the fringes have to interpret. But analytically, it is limited. A conception of the system in dual terms can only be achieved through polemic foreshortening of timescales into, for example, evolutionary stages, or the typification of a dominant force, such as an undifferentiated "capitalism," or the collapse of levels into, for example, the "peasant and the state." Even with more finely drawn models, foreshortening, typifying, and collapsing can conceal important intervening processes. One needs to analyze particular levels of inclusive, multi-level systems in terms which allow the dynamics of dominance, interpenetration, or resistance between them to be explored, without necessarily undertaking a full-fledged analysis of every level. This means taking a process which is assumed to be generally relevant, and developing concepts and methods which both retain the specificity of the particular level under study, and also aim at consonance with those used for analysis of other levels.

In the present case I have described the "labor process," the structure of work in the rural economy and the development of the division of labor, and traced the relationship between agriculture itself as a technical occupation and changing structures of resource control. The first could be further related to trends at the level of agricultural ecology, the second to wider systems of regional differentiation and to policy measures. To do this, the division of labor has to be described in several dimensions, a set of mutually implicated, but analytically separable, aspects, through which people translate the political, the cultural and the material into one another. The following were used for this case: (a) the cultural definitions and justifications for different kinds of tasks or occupation, (b) the technical nature of the process and the product, (c) the synchronization of work times, (d) the means of control over resources and terms of distribution of the product, and, finally, (e) the scale and legal/jural status of the social relations and unit(s) within which these processes take place. In more general terms these could be glossed as the cultural, technical, organiza-

tional, political and legal/jural dimensions of family production. But defining them more concretely allows much greater precision of both description, and analysis of their mutual implications over time.

Much of this material might be subsumed descriptively under "household economics," but the household is a clumsy concept for tracing inter-level dynamics, for two main reasons. First of all, the theory of the household basically concerns two-level interactions: domestic group and political structure, household composition and production patterns, household decision-making and price structures. Holding constant the other levels of interaction may be possible and a defensible heuristic strategy when the overall structure enclosing the units is definable, as, for example, in Kula's model of the Polish feudal system (1976), but it is very problematic under other conditions. Kula benefits in the same way as Braudel and others, in that vast amounts of empirical data already exist on their subject, and also that there is historical, and therefore structural, closure on the system. Neither condition applies to Africa in the twentieth century; any sense of the nature and implications of change at one level demands looking in detail at the conditions beyond and within, in this case, regional politics and economics at the more inclusive level, and agricultural practice at the lower level. Even with this proviso, feminist concerns about "cross-cutting" principles of social segmentation are a powerful challenge to resting content with the implicit functionalism, or dialectical unity, of two-level approaches.[11]

Secondly, the analytical dimensions of some household theories are too limited for exploring the dynamics between levels. In addressing the question of "how and why households vary within and between societies or over time in the same society," Netting, Wilk, and Arnould identify three analytically important dimensions: form (morphology), function (activity), and conceptual framework (1984: xxviii).[12] It seems to me that this scheme omits dimensions which could link the family to wider, longer-term social processes. One needs to be able to see the dilemmas, dissonances, creative syntheses, differentiation, or conflict which produce change. With the topic of family production addressed here, I have needed (a) more dimensions than simply form, task, and concept, (b) a set of dimensions including culturally specific aspects and others which can be used across levels or translated easily into the appropriate terms to apply at other levels, and (c) the possibility of greater precision of description. The way in which behavior shifts as conditions change - whether prices, or crop types, or legal prescriptions -

[11]Efforts to preserve a two-part model are likely to prove frustrating no matter what the theoretical frame. Although the idea of articulation captures a sense of Africa which, in my opinion, no other such condensed term can, it is still analytically rigid, as is the term "dialectic," the idea of "internal" and "external" dynamics, the relationship between "macro" and "micro" forces, because of the implication of two-part structures, when the whole process is one of interpenetration and emergence.

[12]The new directions represented in this important collection have not been assimilated systematically enough to be addressed in my own work. The comments here are reactions to the general overview papers, not to the variety of positions explored in the case studies.

depends on the reworking of one or several of those processes, and tracing the implications depends on having separated them.[13]

There are important comparative questions which can only be addressed with a departure from a two-stage, stimulus-response analysis of change. The relationship between wider opportunities and constraints and actual production patterns is one such issue. For example, the task or tool-based division of labor which seems characteristic of cultivation of the ancient African staples is organizationally quite different from the crop or field-based division of labor which has tended to characterize the new staples (Guyer 1984). Where large production units contained complex networks of specialization and distribution, the patterns of change resulting from their breakdown under the kind of political influence suggested by Clarke (1981) is likely to differ from the disaggregative pattern of the Beti. The effects on farming practice and other productive enterprise depend on this internal structure. Similarly with tracing the reasons for, and consequences of, innovation. Susan Martin argues that farming and processing in early twentieth-century Eastern Nigeria are not understandable without analysis of "gender relations ... [which] had a strong influence on local patterns of labor scarcity" (1983:i).

Finally, to return to the question of persistence, this example shows the difficulty, and perhaps arbitrariness, of interpreting the long term, the "underlying geological formations" (Ladurie 1977:117) in a historically open system. Neither "traditional" techniques nor "traditional" gender relations explain modern women's farming. Neither techniques nor social relations have actually remained unchanged in any absolute sense, or rather, it is impossible to claim that they have without an explicit theory identifying and explaining "significant" change. It is rather that the long run reveals particular persistent associations of elements in farming practice and the division of labor, whose quantitative realization and structural articulation with the larger system have shifted. Although these emerge from a search directed by theoretical questions, they are empirically discovered; that is, they are not institutions in the older sense of persistent patterns of activities defined, by the theorist, in terms of a particular task or function. Bourdieu's concept of "habitus," an internally defined set of improvizations, contains essential attributes, but does not yet direct attention to the relationship between these persistent motifs and historical dynamics on a broader scale. The importance of isolating and describing them is to allow precise exploration of the range and implications of successive realizations and articulations.

Here I have attempted to document persistence and change in family relations and agricultural practice, acknowledging that this is only a contribution to a more defined theory of material life than exists for modern Africa at present. Such an approach is not yet well formulated; it is embedded in different disciplines and analytical orientations. At this point one is still exploring the terrain - of anthropology, history, and development studies, of

[13]Sanjek (1982) has also tried to add more dimensions to household studies; while sympathetic with direction, I find the comparative study of households per se a troublesome topic, tending to lead inevitably to positing a list of universal functions.

household studies and farming research - to see whether, and how, monocropping traditions might be transcended, at least in part, by an intellectual intercropping which approaches compatibility of ideas and productivity of direction by test and demonstration rather than by exclusion.[14] As Clarence-Smith has noted (1977), there has been no concerted attempt at a social history of African material life, in Braudelian style.[15] Without necessarily being committed to Braudel's implicit theoretical framework,[16] one can conceive of a general plan and attack a particular patch of bush. That orientation must include an analytical framework for examining more than two levels of the social order at once, for tracing change in sequences which go beyond two-stage entailments, and for bringing the classic dimensions of social life - culture, politics, material life, organization, and jural control - into relationship with one another. Since I believe that it is at least partly an adherence to the search for relatively stark, two-part structural relations which has seemed to pit feminist theory against other structural approaches, enlarging the field would also set up the conditions for including gender in analysis aimed at broader general processes. Put in the abstract, this seems daunting; for defined issues and particular case, however, it can be grounded.

This may seem to add up to a plea for particularism; one could be haunted by Gellner's terse comment that "when we have real explanations the specification of the path is redundant, and when we do not, it cannot help us" (1964:20). But the precise specification of the path is a necessary step; this is true in general, but is particularly true in terms of our need to modify a map of the division of labor and women's farming which is based on evolutionary comparative method, and to re-explore the comparative terrain, drawing on other works about women and farming [17], or studies of the intensification of agriculture in the hinterland of other cities.

[14]The alternative - overworking the territory and sensing declining fertility setting in - could not be better expressed than in a recent article on households by Hammel (1984). His conclusion, that households be defined not by form or function, but as "a level in a taxonomy of social inclusion" and that research pursue "their articulation with larger social fields" (1984:41) seems consonant with the approach I have used here. His elaboration of this position is, however, terse enough to leave many issues undiscussed, especially the kind of social processes and articulations which are most central to his guiding theoretical concerns.

[15]For a brief review of interpretive issues in the study of African technology, see Austen and Headrick 1983.

[16]Tilly's critique of Braudel points out what seems to me the crucial relationship to explore, between "material life as a constraint on human choices" and broader political and economic change. Tilly argues that Braudel documents both but ultimately does not "judge the contribution" of material life, in this case, demographic dynamics, or "incorporate them into his explanatory system" (1984:392).

[17]The literature on Central Africa seems richer in historical studies of this sort, perhaps under the inspiration of Audrey Richards (1939); for example, most recently, Muntemba (1980), Lancaster (1981), Mandala (1982), and Wright (1983).

Appendix A

REGIONAL ECOLOGICAL CONDITIONS:
RAINFALL AND POPULATION

Table 1:
Population of Cameroon, Centre-South Province,
Département de la Lékié 1976

	Population	Density per km2
Cameroon	7,663,246	16.5
Centre-South	1,491,945	12.9
Lekie	165,712	54.8

Source: Combien Sommes Nous? Perspectives de Développement Integré de la Province du Centre-Sud. United Republic of Cameroon, Ministry of Economy and Plan.

Table 2
Population Growth of Yaoundé, 1957-1975

Year	Population	Source
1957	54,343	R.F.C. 1970
1962	89,970	R.F.C. 1970
1969	165,810	Franqueville 1979: 323
1975	313,706	R.U.C. 1976

Figure 1:
Rainfall at Yaoundé, 1970-1981

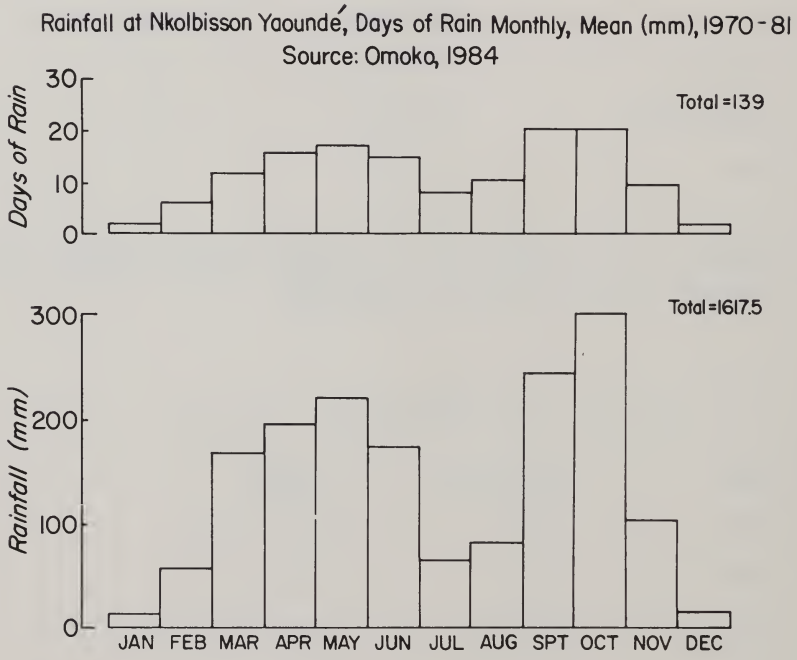
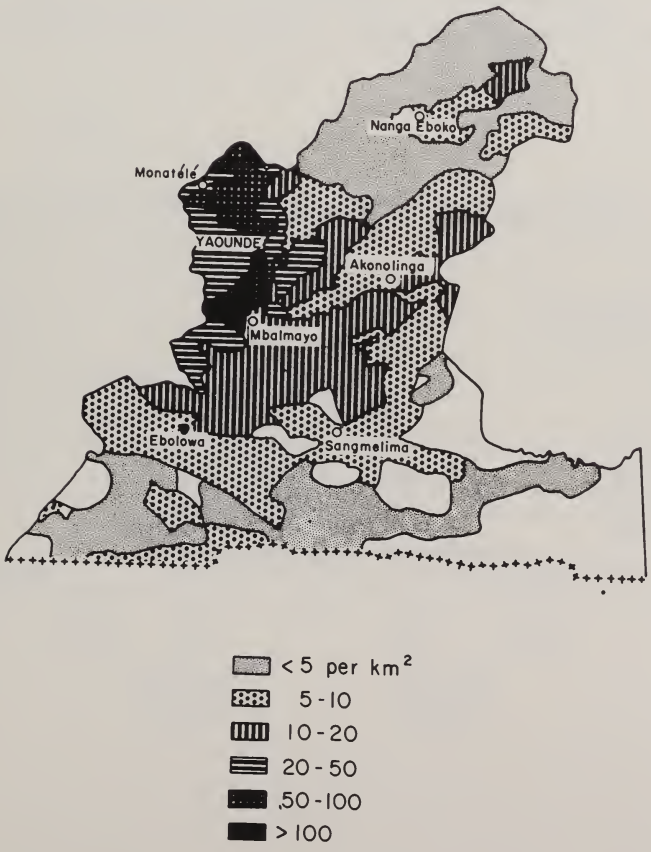


Figure 2:
Population Density, the Beti and Bulu Regions



Appendix B:

DEMOGRAPHIC STRUCTURE,
PRIMARY RESEARCH VILLAGES

Figure 1:
Age and Sex Distribution in Two Eton Villages

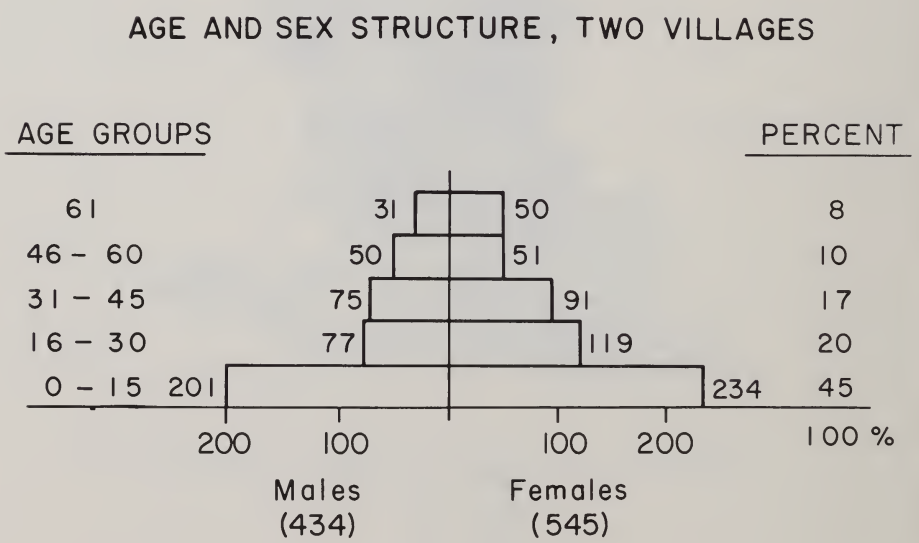


Figure 2:
Household Size, Two Eton Villages

Appendix C

SOME MAJOR STAPLES:
ENGLISH, BETI, AND BOTANICAL NAMES

English	Beti	Botanical
cassava	mbon	manihot spp.
plantain	ekon	musa paradisaica
yam	ekodo (pl. bikodo, Ewondo)	dioscorea spp.
	djo (pl. bio, Eton)	"
yam species	andia, asol	dioscorea dumetorum
	ekodo, nnya ekodo	d. rotundata
	singili	d. Cayenensis
	enyuma (Ewondo)	d. alata
	mbese (Eton)	"
	kpede	unknown
taro	atu	colocasia antiquorum
cocoyam	akaba	xanthosoma Sagittifolia
maize	fon (Ewondo)	zea mays
	mbas (Eton)	"
groundnuts	owondo	arachis hypogea
melon-seeds	ngon	cucum spp.
	ngon	cucumeropsis manii
	omgbalak, omgbas	cucumis sativus

Further varieties of yam, cassava, plantain, and groundnuts are identified by name, as are numerous leaf vegetables and fruits.

Appendix D

MEN'S INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

The present appendix gives examples of men's incomes and expenditures in more substantive detail.

Cocoa

All studies of the Center-South have found a wide range of cocoa incomes. The greatest range in the cooperative data, for 1972/73, was from 8,295 francs CFA to 392,382. The coefficient of variation for the three years was between 60 percent and 80 percent. In all three years, however, the 75th and 25th percentiles were only 60,000 francs CFA apart, so that 50 percent of the cases fall within 30,000 CFA of the mean. There are extreme outliers at each end. As far as I can trace these people, only the lower end is explainable in stuctural terms. Some are young men whose farms are not yet bearing. Otherwise, there is a whole range of largely personal reasons why men earn as they do. One of the poorest was known to be unstable and one of the richest had inherited a large farm and worked on it extremely hard. Some writing on cocoa suggests that it is a "retirement" crop, a savings fund. Certainly it is not as exigent of labor as other crops but it is responsive to care. One relatively well-off farmer, whom people were commenting on as having neglected his large farm in 1974 and 1975, shows an income decline in the cooperative records of over 100,000 CFA from about 250,000 to 140,000. Some members show quite startling personal fluctuations in cocoa income. While some of this could be due to problems with the records themselves (sales to illegal buyers, sales to one another before the official sale), it is far too general a phenomenon to explain away, and certainly militates against placing any confidence in structural interpretations of income figures for a single year.

The costs of production are constituted as follows:

1. Equipment and chemicals

The price of chemicals increased in 1975 from 40 CFA to 65 CFA per packet, and a conscientious farmer with 1-2 hectares of cocoa may use 100 or more packets, which are supplied on credit. A sprayer cost 13,000 CFA in 1975, and may last several years, although the farmers were very critical of the quality of the type now on the market; that is, 6,500 CFA for chemicals, 13,000 CFA for a sprayer which lasts anywhere from 1 to 10 years = at least 8,000 CFA per annum.

2. Labor for upkeep

Relatively few farmers use regular laborers, but the larger plantations, and those with absentee owners require routine care. Almost all the costs I have records for are about 10- 12,000 CFA per man per year, but for varying amounts of work. Some agreements are

for clearing only, others include spraying, and others require the laborer to organize the whole harvest and drying, including the cooking of food for the work party by the laborer's wife (the food, of course, is bought by the owner). One laborer worked for a proportion of the gross proceeds of the plantation: 1/3. The laborers all felt that they were underpaid (15,000 CFA was considered more reasonable), but they still often had trouble getting the owners to pay them. The laborers are almost all young men without plantations of their own, who also work their father's plantations for no fixed recompense.

3. Harvest labor

Because of the "work party" system, the harvest is expensive. The basic cost of food and drink for the workers comes to almost exactly 1,000 CFA per sack harvested. One 80 kg. sack of cocoa is worth approximately 10,000 CFA, therefore food costs are about 1/10 of the value of the harvest.

Example:

a. Harvest of 15 sacks
40 people, including 12 transporters
Costs: one pig - 6,000
palm wine - 5,000
some red wine, beer, cigarettes, food staples and soup ingredients from wife's farm

Total: about 14,000 CFA
(proprietor's estimate).

b. Harvest of 1 sack
5 people
Costs: meat and palm wine - 1,000 CFA

In addition to being fed, the women who are called to help were traditionally given one basin of top quality cocoa each. Asking a particular woman to help on the cocoa harvest is seen as a favor because it provides her with an extra money income. The practice of giving the actual cocoa has declined because the men want their cocoa sold under their own name, in order to get the rebate; but, in theory, the women are still entitled to the equivalent of a basin of good cocoa - about 1/5 of a sack, or about 2,000 CFA. At one particular harvest pary of forty people, only four of the women were there by invitation; the rest were there by kinship obligation, or to stand in for an absent male relative. If they received the traditional recompense, this would be 4/5 of a sack of top grade cocoa.

The women who work on cocoa by obligation, the planter's female dependents, are traditionally entitled to the hors standard. Again, this practice has been modified by the farmers' desire for the rebates on the total weight of cocoa produced. (Up to 1976 rebates were not paid on hors standard, but have since been instituted.) The women still feel entitled to the money, but it is very often given

to the children, these days, to finance their school expenses. The average value of the hors standard per farmer in 1975/76 (58 farmers) was 17,368 CFA.

If the tax is added to these commitments, then one can see that, from the individual farmer's point of view, a substantial amount of his money is already used. Costs of production are probably around 15-20 percent of gross income, if one counts only the strictly necessary expenses of chemicals, equipment, laborers, and food for the work party.

Tomatoes

Tomato production is a growing source of income for men in the 20 to 40 age group. It is very hard physical work which requires careful attention, and yields a variable income because of seasonal price changes. The following are farmers' own estimates. A standard plot of 3,000 plants can be worked by a man alone. The costs in fertilizer, insecticide, and seed are about 12,000 CFA per season. Hire of a plot of land, if this is necessary, is about 15,000 CFA per season. This plot may produce 40 cases of tomatoes, 20 kg. a case (800 kg.). The high and low prices for a case were 3,000 and 800 CFA in 1976, giving a gross income of 120,000 to 32,000. Large scale growers employ regular full-time laborers on a monthly basis at 8- 9,000 CFA per month. Most of these laborers are foreigners; any villager could grow his own plot instead of working for someone else. Transport costs to Yaoundé are 50 CFA per case, and the cases themselves cost 150 CFA each (they are re-usable).

Net incomes from tomatoes vary with the level of input, the prevailing prices and, above all, the level of skill. One man, with his wife's help, may make as much as 300,000 CFA a year if he works all three seasons. On the other hand, total failures are not common.

Certain farmers have become real experts; their income varies with the market price rather than the physical productivity. They are committed to tomatoes as their major source of income. Others, mainly young men, work a season once in a while to earn a specific sum of money, to finance housebuilding, bridewealth or education. Tomato incomes are often superior to cocoa incomes and provide lump sums of money twice or three times a year instead of once.

Palm Wine Tapping

Tapping, as a source of income, has several advantages. It can be done by the young and middle aged, it provides small amounts of money on a regular basis, and it can be combined with other work because it is demanding mainly in late afternoon and early morning.

Where the men have to transport it to the road for sale, they usually sell only one dame-jeanne of 20 litres per day. In 1975 this sold for 500 CFA. A felled tree which produces well gives 3 litres a day for up to a month, therefore a man may be able to make a daily income of 500 CFA from tapping about 10 trees. Trees tapped from the top produce less and are more time-consuming and dangerous to tap. Where the tappers do not own enough of their own trees, they may have to give some of the proceeds of the sale to the owner of the trees.

If a man tapped palm wine every day, five days a week, during 20 weeks of the year his income would be in the range of 50,000 CFA. Hardly anyone is as consistent as this, but many young men make the major part of their income from palm wine tapping. Unlike cocoa and tomato income, palm wine provides small amounts on a regular basis. It has advantages for meeting day to day expenses but disadvantages for financing major expenses because it has to be carefully saved over long periods.

Wage Labor

Wage labor for cocoa work has already been discussed; it amounts to about 12,000 CFA per year. Some men also clear women's fields for cash, but many of these are foreigners, rather than villagers. The prevailing price is about 2,000 CFA per 10 ares, which works out at approximately 400 CFA for a long day's work. This is seasonal work, limited to February and August, before the two growing seasons.

Conclusion

Cocoa, and for some men, tomato cultivation is the basis of their income. When a man's income from one of these sources is fairly high, he does not usually do much tapping and never does wage labor. These two activities are for the young, and the poor.

Men's Expenses

These approximations to men's incomes can be compared with the prices of some of their major expenses.

1. Tax: basic level 3,000 CFA p.a.

2. School Costs

Examples of particular families:

a. 4 children, all in public school

Basic school cost: 1,000 CFA per child =	4,000
Books: approximately 3,000 per child =	12,000
Clothes: 1 "complet de fête" each =	4,000
TOTAL	20,000

Not included: exercise books, pencils.

b. 1 child at technical college

School fees:	32,000
Books:	20,000
Uniform:	4,000
TOTAL	56,000

c. 2 children at mission school

School fees: 2,600 per child =	5,200
Books: 3,000 per child =	6,000
Clothes: 1,700 per child =	3,400
TOTAL	14,600

One child in a technical school or private secondary school can absorb the entire annual net income of an average cocoa farmer. Even public school at the elementary level costs 5,000 CFA per child per year, without minor supplies.

3. Bridewealth

There is a wide range in bridewealth now, as high as 150,000 CFA, and as little as 50,000.

Examples (from the records of the Okola Tribunal)

a. 50,000 CFA
   4 goats
   55 litres of red wine
   1 bottle of whisky
   1 traditional cloth

b. 80,000 CFA

1 bottle of whisky	=	1,850
1 dame-jeanne red wine	=	5,000
1 dress for the mother-in-law	=	3,500
1 wrapper	=	2,000
1 goat	=	8,000
Another 2 goats	=	16,000
Medical costs paid	=	20,000
Transport	=	4,000
TOTAL		140,000 CFA

c. 69,000 CFA
   7 goats
   1 pig
   40 litres red wine
   600 litres palm wine
   1 case beer
   4 glasses
   1 wool blanket
   1 wrapper
   1 carton of cigarettes
   2 matchets
   4 pieces of cloth
   1 large dish
   7 dresses
   1 pair of shoes

A bridewealth is about 1 1/2 years of average cocoa income.

4. Housing

Houses vary greatly in expense. A woman's one-room kitchen, with a metal roof, can be 30- 40,000 CFA, and with a palm roof, as little as 15,000 CFA depending on size. The following is an example of a house with one large room and six small ones, uncemented, built in 1974:

Wooden stakes: 200	25,000
Transport of stakes	7,000
120 sheets of metal roofing	55,000
20 rafters	36,000
Transport of rafters	13,000
6 rolls of wire at 800 CFA each	4,800
Laborers to build mud walls - 11 each at 10,000 CFA each	20,000
4 windows and 3 doors	45,000
TOTAL	205,800 CFA

The holes for the stakes were dug by a group of friends in a work party. They also put on the roof. The owner cut his own palm branches, split and dried them for the horizontal interlacings for the walls. He and a group of friends wired the split palm branches into place. The women and children mixed and carried the mud for the walls. Food and drink for the work parties is not included in the cost.

Conclusion

The men's expenses tend to come in a definite chronological order - first bridewealth, then housebuilding, then school fees. Any of these costs can take from 1/2 to 2 years of money income. Even with a cash income of 100,000 CFA p.a. and all the food provided by his wife, a man who wants to educate his children can find himself stretched beyond the limit, with no extra to buy clothes or anything for the household. One father of seven children, whose income from cocoa was recorded as 92,655 CFA in 1975-76, worked as a laborer on someone else's plantation, tapped palm wine, and still lived in an unfinished house with no carpentered windows or doors.

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